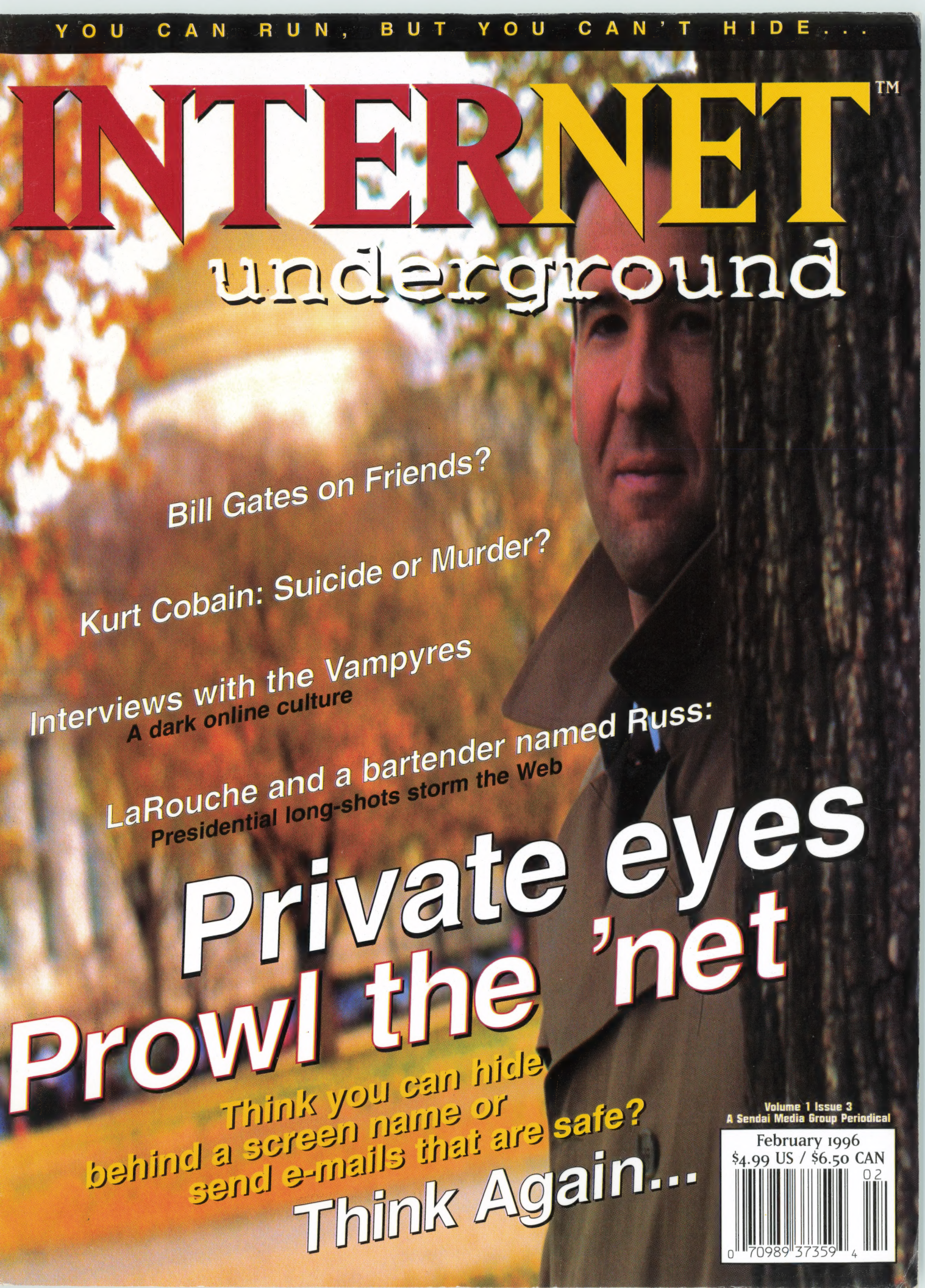
YOU CAN RUN, BUT YOU CAN'T HIDE...

INTERNET™ underground



Bill Gates on Friends?

Kurt Cobain: Suicide or Murder?

Interviews with the Vampyres
A dark online culture

LaRouche and a bartender named Russ:
Presidential long-shots storm the Web

Private eyes Prowl the 'net

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Volume 1 Issue 3
A Sendai Media Group Periodical
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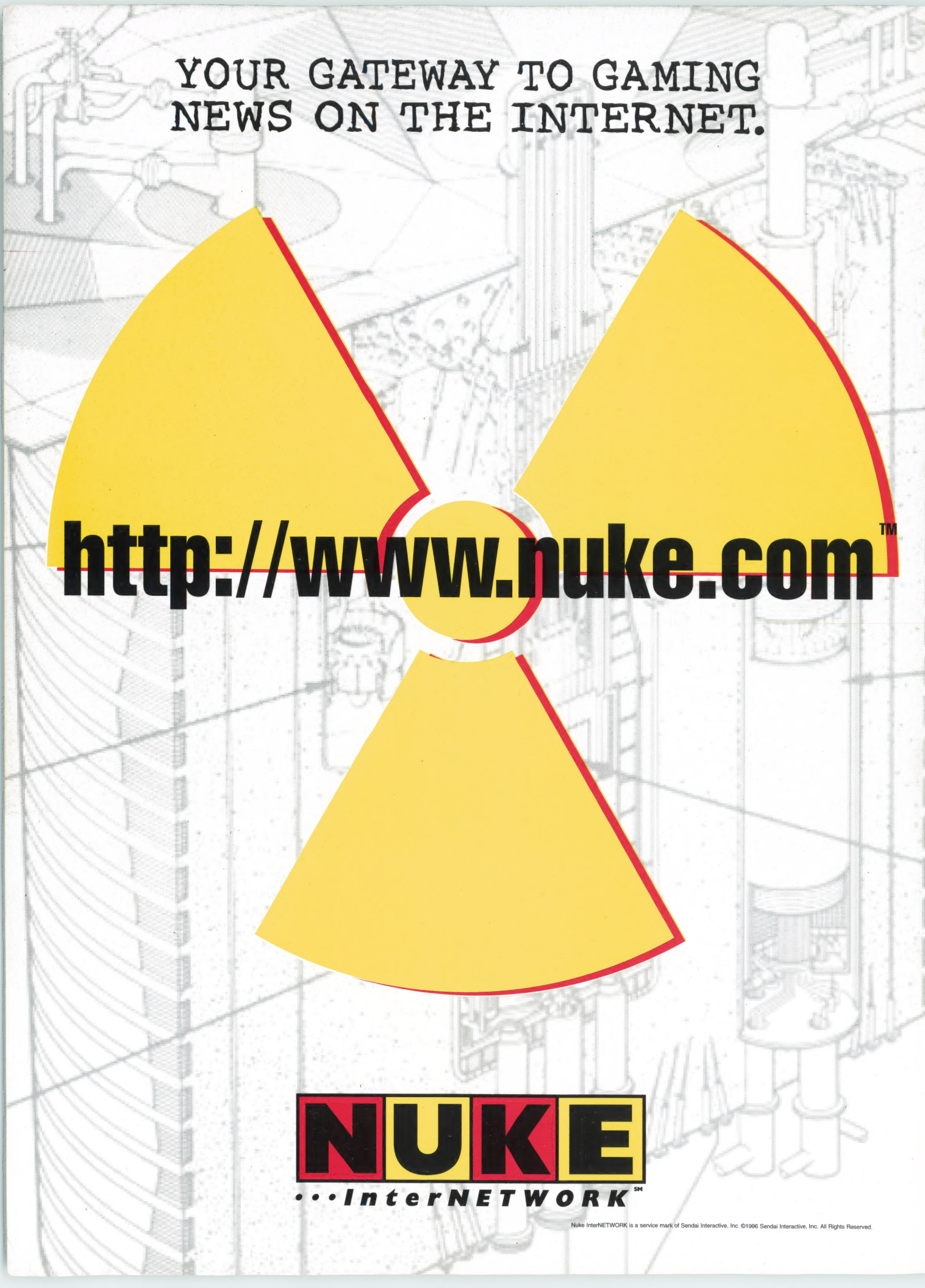
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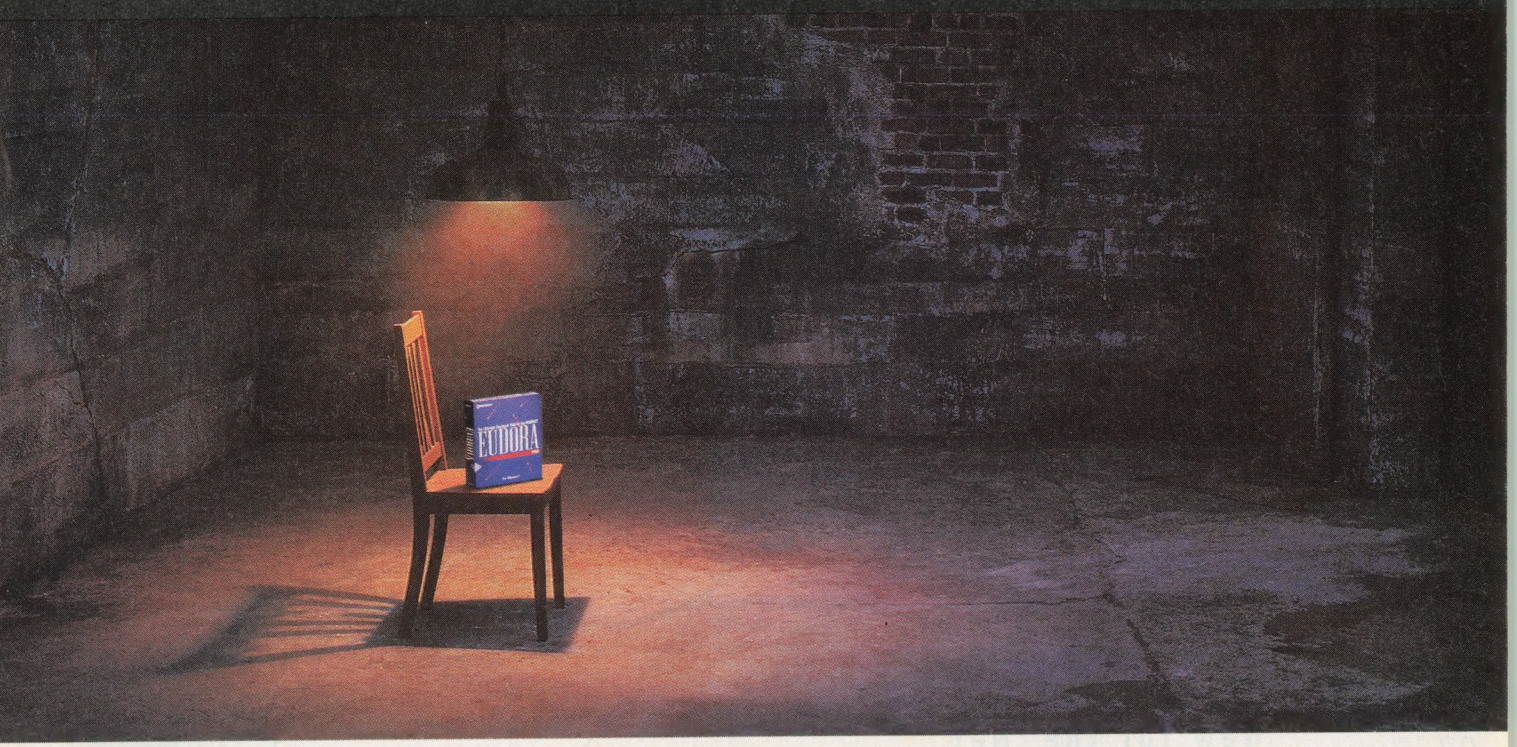

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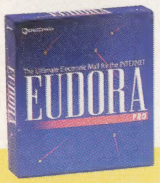

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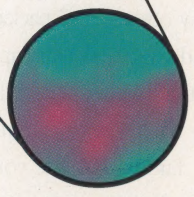
Cover Image by Gail Shust and the IU Art Staff



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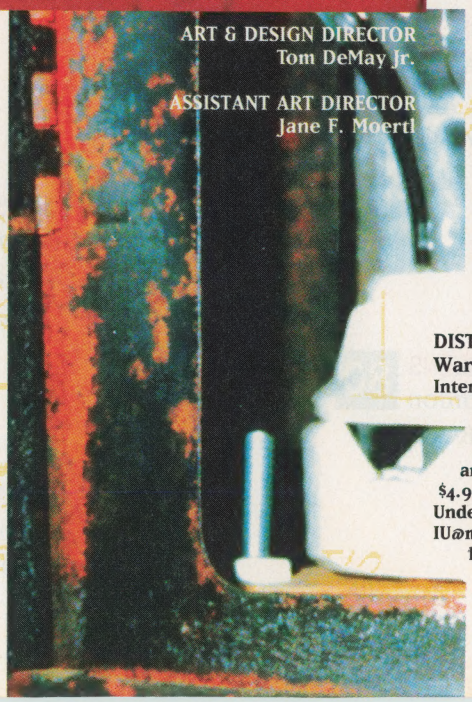
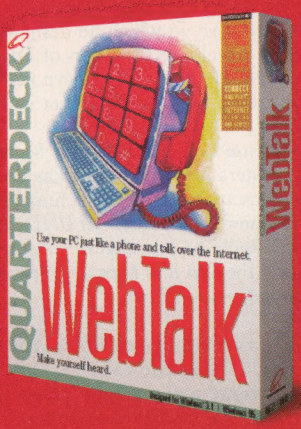


IF IRRITATION PERSISTS, DISCONTINUE USE AND CONTACT YOUR LOCAL POISON CONTROL CENTER.

(three)

3

QUARTERDECK



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Contributors to the Underground

Bob King is an investigative reporter with the *Sarasota* (Fla.) *Herald-Tribune,* where he's earned the nickname "Bullet" for both his speedy writing and thunderous runs through the newsroom. For our cover story, King tracked down private eyes who have foregone the old-fashioned gumshoe route in favor of the point-and-click method. King is shown here dressed as Richard Nixon, someone who knew how to get the goods on folks without their knowledge. This is his first cover story for *Internet Underground.* (bobking@gate.net)

Editorial illustrator **Richard Downs** works for national consumer and trade magazines, although he recently stepped into the brave new world of multimedia with his first CD-ROM, *The Dark Eye*, in which he designed all the game's icons. He recently completed a graphic novel interpretation of Edgar Alan Poe's masterpiece *The Masque of the Red Death*. He lives in Southern California and sometimes the 'net. His work accompanies this month's cover story. (downsart@inland.net)

Prolific *IU* editor-at-large **Simson L. Garfinkel** ("My Secret Life with Phil Zimmermann," "The Webmasters Are Watching") has been using the Internet since his days at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1983—before it was even called the Internet. His new book, *Practical UNIX and Internet Security,* will be published in March by O'Reilly & Associates. A frequent contributor to *Wired, Worth,* the *Boston Globe* and the *San Jose Mercury News*, Garfinkel wrote *IU's* January cover story. (simsong@vineyard.net)

Regular *IU* contributor **Greg Grabianski** ("The Fool's Guide to Online Love," "Real-Life Cybersex") is a writer for MTV's *Beavis & Butthead* and regularly graces (or disgraces) the pages of *Cracked Magazine,* which he describes as being "like *Mad,* but funny." He's also written for *Mad* and even *The Sun* (yes, folks, the supermarket tabloid) where he has written dozens of classic ssuch as "Possessed Parrot Recites Curse that Kills Its Owner" and "Duck Hunter Accidentally Shoots Small, Winged Demon." Currently, he's at work on a "top-secret" sitcom being developed by United Paramount Network. He resides in Chicago and enjoys beer. Reach him via IU@mcs.net

Photographer **John Livzey** ("The (w)Hole Truth") works out of Hollywood, Calif. John's been behind the lens 20-plus years now, with work featured in *National Geographic* and *Smithsonian* magazines. Art Director Tom DeMay says he's a hell of a great guy, to boot. (Such plugs keep our photo costs down.)

Managing editor **Alex Gordon** ("The American Precedent") has no immediate plans to run for office, although we often wonder with the way he glad-hands everyone. A graduate of the master's program at Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism, Gordon previously worked as editorial director of *INsider* magazine. He has strange taste in office decor, but knows where to score a good bagel. Asg@mcs.net

Gail Shust took the cover photos of private eye Joseph Seanor. Shust has contributed photos and designs to many magazines in the U.S. and Britain. She is one of three partners of Schwa Design Group, a Washington, D.C., creative services firm. Check out their site at http://www.theschwacorporation.com/

Nancy Ranck ("Interviews with the Vampyres") describes her dark, brooding photography as an expression of emotion and how her profession has impacted her life as of late. "The physical parameters of the photographs have been extended beyond the actual film frame to include more of a full scope of related visual and verbal experiences as it pertains to the image." Ranck's work is now on exhibit at the Scarab Club in Detroit, where she lives.

Mark Monday ("Address Unknown," "My Secret Life with Phil Zimmermann") is an illustrator who operates a butter churn restoration company in Detroit. He fervently defends his idea that E.L. Kirchner is one of the few artists in the modern era to have gotten it completely right, and claims to have actually worked under the job title "Lord of Kerning and Justification" at a Detroit publishing company. (kunstler00@aol.com)

Sharon Marson and **Craig Steen** are graduate students at Eastern Michigan University. Their fonts, Procession and Flattop, respectively, can be found regularly in *IU.* The fonts were featured in *Metropolis* magazine in an article about modern type designers, and will be included in a modern typography and design book from Rick Poynor in the coming year. Sharon is hard at work on the ludicrously named font La-Dee-Dah.

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letter from the editor is not signed.

After all, why do you really need to know who wrote it? The message remains the same. Your experience with the words would likely be unaltered if you knew which of our staff wrote it. We are all faceless strangers to you anyway.

WE WOULD

But on the 'net, you can check my e-mail (if you know my address) to find out my name. By the location of my server, you're likely to find out where I live. If you know a Web address, you can check with InterNic to find the individual who filed for the right to the domain name. The list goes on.

On the 'net, privacy as a precious commodity can be a tough argument. Online archives brim with software that developers felt should be free. Hackers unearth information because they feel it ought to belong to everyone, that secrets are a dangerous thing.

CODE THIS MESSAGE

Yet, consider too that the man who tracked down, then killed actress Rebecca Schaeffer found her address through an online database. In George Orwell's classic *1984*, Big Brother knew everything about everyone. Knowledge of any kind is power. In Orwell's Oceania, the loss of individual identity allowed for complete control of the entire society as well.

Here in the underground, we're divided. We don't like the government to keep things from us, that's just plain wrong. If the truth is out there, we should have it. But when it comes to individuals, when do you cross the line from right to know to invasion of privacy?

IF WE COULD...

In this issue of *Internet Underground*, we examine the issues of privacy in several ways. For starters, we take a look at how private investigators use the 'net. What better group to know the ways to misuse all that information on Clinton's superhighway. In our cover story by Bob King, we learned that the 'net, coupled with other technology, can allow for access to your private dealings you might not like. King also tracked down an L.A. private eye who decided to do more with the 'net than simply look for information. On his Web site, he offers his beliefs on why it's possible Courtney Love had Kurt Cobain murdered.

As you surf, you may not realize that by hyperlinking to visit a site, you are unwittingly offering information. Contributing editor Simson Garfinkel explains how UNIX log files allow Webmasters to determine not only who visits their sites, but also what specific pages they access, the hyperlinks they hit and how long they stay there.

Of course, there are a few ways to protect your security through obscurity, especially with e-mail.

Although it seems safe enough, the 'net is a non-secure forum in which e-mail can be broken, tapped and traced. Garfinkel, in an excerpt from

his book *PGP: Pretty Good Privacy* explains how Pretty Good Privacy encryption software works and a bit about the issues surrounding it.

In a separate article, staff writer Sarah Ellerman explains the politics and workings of anonymous remailer services, those outposts in the ether that let you attach some anonymity to your e-mail before you send it.

To avoid being tracked on the Web, well...we don't have an answer. We suppose you could give it up for TV. After all, as you stare at that screen, no one can monitor every channel you visit, each rerun of *The Love Boat* that you view.

Gee, we'd almost forgotten about that show. And they say the Web is vapid. ○

Security through Obscurity

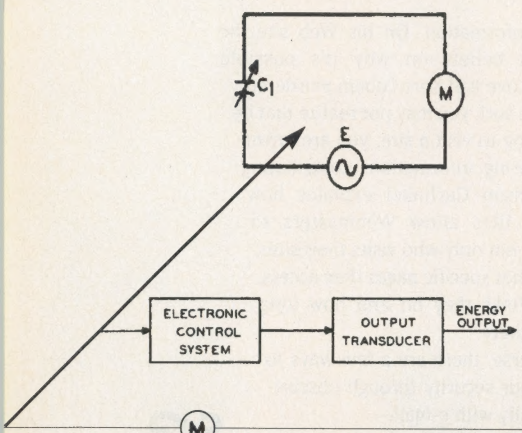
LETTERS) We swear, we didn't make these up!

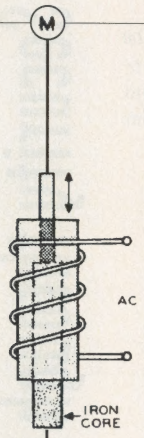
Finally the CyberGod has heard my daily prayers for an Internet

publication written for regular Internauts. Your first issue was by far the best Internet magazine I've read in my entire life. Keep up the good work. My subscription check is in the snail-mail.

OVIDIU GHERGHE
OVIGHER@IX.NETCOM.COM
OVI'S WORLD OF THE BIZARRE
HTTP://NETMAR.COM/USERS/OVIGHER/OVI.HTM

Tiny: Ovidiu, we're blushing! I bet you say that to all the 'netmagazines... (BTW, I checked out Ovi's site. It's very weird and cool.)





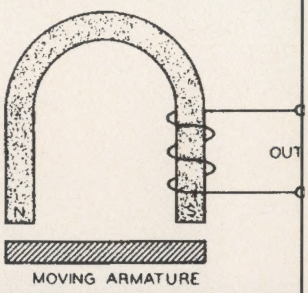
Congratulations on your magazine—It looks kind of like a version of Wired *you can actually read.*

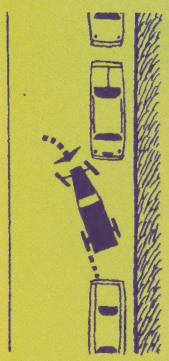
Helpful hint:

If you want to live up to the name Internet Underground *(as opposed to just "WWW Underground"), remember there are a ton of weeeeird Usenet groups and even weirder ftp sites out there. Not to mention gopher (the fact that some people still use it seems "underground" in itself, not meaning to make an obvious pun), really odd MUDs, MUSHs, MOOs, etc. you can telnet to (forming whole subcultures on each of them), and WAIS, whatever that is.*

STEVE BERLIN
STEV0@CHACO.COM

Tiny: Steve, Call me sentimental, but just the sight of the word *gopher* made me hark back to a kinder, gentler time. Ah, for the olden days... Just so you know, WAIS is a wide area information search.





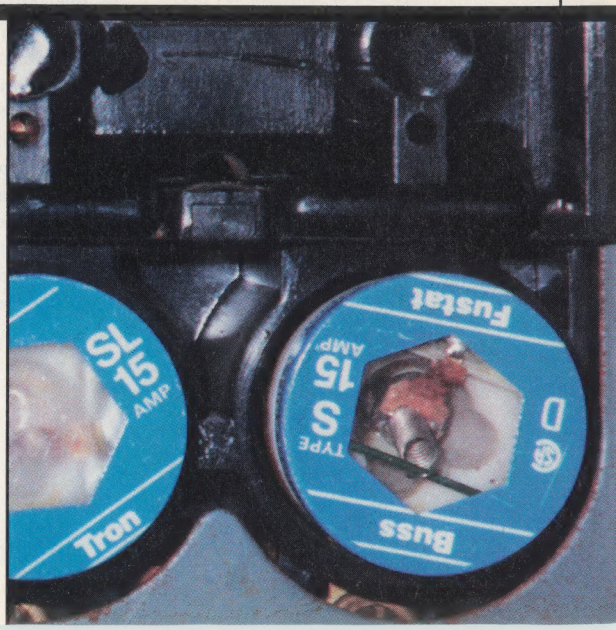
STEP 3

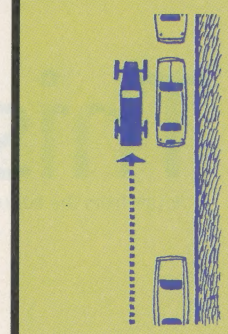
Swing the front wheels so as to bring front of car near curb.

Kudos! to your first issue of Internet Underground.

I found the magazine's fresh perspective on the Internet very insightful. This is the first magazine that I've picked up that actually has some interesting content and articles. I especially enjoyed your articles "Arbiters of Cool" and "The Bug Heard Around the World," please continue to follow in this general direction of getting personal with the Web creators of some of the Web's most interesting sites, as well as covering some of the highlights of news on the 'net.

CHRIS STEELE
CSTEELE@INTERLOG.COM





STEP 1

Drive up in a straight line and stop even with and fairly close to the car in front.

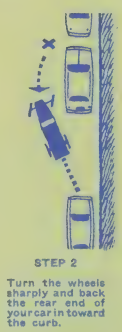
With Issue #3, we'd like to introduce the newest member of our *IU* staff, Tiny, the Mail Guy. Pictured above in the luxurious climes of his office, Tiny is standing by right now to receive all your praise and criticism. So what are you waiting for? Direct your ire or kudos to Tiny, the Mail Guy via *e-mail* to IU@mcs.net, *by fax* to (708) 916-7227 *or over land* to 1920 Highland Ave., Ste. 222 Lombard, IL 60148

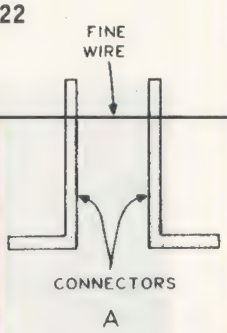
I just want to send a note to let you know that I haven't been this impressed with a new magazine since I read the first issue of *Spy*. I think you're gonna be huge. I'm starting my collection now. I hope to see more ink on other parts of the 'net, not just the Web, such as IRC channels, Usenet, MUDs, gophers, et. al.
Robert Kelly
bobcat@earthlink.com

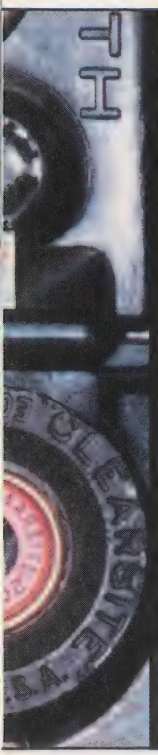
Do you have a web site for Internet Underground?

If so, could you please let me know what it is?
Chris Burnett
burnettc@office.uncg.edu

Tiny says: Yes, visit the fabulous underground online at http://www.nuke.com/underground.html. That goes for all you other folks, too.





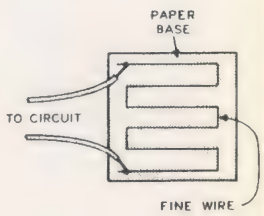


That was a great first issue. You have managed to provide a fresh look and feel to the already overgrown computer and Internet-related magazine market. Sign me up!

Kenneth Ong
73457.1214@
compuserve.com

Just dropping an e-note to let you all know that I just finished reading Vol. 1 Issue 1 and I think it's the best thing since sliced bread. Actually, I never really liked sliced bread; I much prefer biting into a loaf of bread like a glutton. Anyway, I loved the Web Guide insert, it had some of the coolest sites I've ever seen (besides mine, of course). Keep up the great work!

Dan Balogh
danb@openix.com
http://www.openix.com/~danb]



I just got issue No. 1 of your magazine and I think it is great. One of my favorite parts was the alt.culture.watch item that pointed out the amount of links it took to get from a "conservative" site to a "not-so-conservative" site. I decided to try it out for myself. Here's one you might like:

- Start at republicans.vt.com *take the link to* vt.com *next to* www.vt.com:80/directory/ *by clicking on the mac-like window then choose* Interesting Pages *from the list*

Your magazine is a great publication which addresses the need of the issues that should be more understood in society. I find your articles very objective and informative.

Dustin Rodriguez
drodrigu@access.k12.wv.us

net top ten

Ftp:wiretap.spies
ftp://wiretap.spies.com

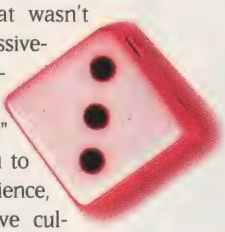
It's not a question of what you can find at this FTP site, but what can't you find if you look long enough. From alien abductions, UFO files and drug recipes to bizarre statistics and tips on how to spy on your friends, this huge site offers hours of bizarre, educational fun. Virtually anyone can post to it, so along with the useful are bizarre stories, disgusting poetry and odd essays on an incredible variety of subjects, from cult films to religions you don't recognize.

Interesting Ideas
http://www.mcs.com/~billsw/home.html

There's no shortage of strange pop culture on the Web, but rarely have we seen a site treating our society's cultural oddities with as unique and insightful an angle as Interesting Ideas. From a brilliantly entertaining analysis of *Leave It to Beaver* to a bizarre collection of roadside art, Bill Swislow's triumphant dissection of pop culture takes our top spot for proving that ideas can reign supreme on the Web. See Spotlight, page 73.

The Deoxyribonucleic Hyperdimension
http://www.intac.com/~dimitri/dh/deoxy.html

We have yet to hit a link on this exhaustive site that wasn't interesting. It impressively combines education with entertainment on stuff "they" might not want you to know, in a mix of science, sociology, subversive culture, LSD, physics, psychics and even the history of thought crimes, starting with that troublesome Galileo. All of long with long discourses on shamanism, various philosophies and a bit of sound from the 1,00-arm audio Buddha. We must say, the creator also includes some of the most interesting links lists we've found on the Web.



Highway 17 Page of Shame
http://www.got.net/~egallant/the_road.html

Drivers on California's Hwy. 17 beware—you are being watched. Disgruntled motorist Emil Gallant with the aid of an Apple QuickTake camera has begun to post shots of the moronic motorists he observes on his daily commute. The hope is that the "Jerque du Jour" will be shamed into correcting their evil ways. Beyond that noble goal, Gallant's rants are hilarious, as is his Repeat Offenders area where he takes on BMW owners and their "Ultimate Rudeness Machines."

The Blue Highway

http://www.vivanet.com/~blues/tbh.html

"The history of the blues is more than a musical chronology. The blues was born the day the West African shoreline fell from the horizon," writes Curtis Hewston, the author of this remarkable site. The Blue Highway includes not only biographies and information about the men and women credited with crafting the blues music genre, but also comprehensive listings of blues radio shows, news and links. You can take a trip down the Blue Highway (U.S. 61) by looking at the 60 photos that capture the landscape and people from New Orleans to Chicago, via the Mississippi Delta.

SonicNet

http://www.sonicnet.com/

Hit the jukebox for music to browse by before you browse this kinetic 'zine designed with a fresh approach to Web graphics and an interesting mix of content put together by writers from all over. Brought to you by GNN, the site features up-to-date club and concert listings for major cities, reviews of new music and essays on subjects of interest to Generation Xers.

Center for the Easily Amused

http://www2.islandnet.com/~cwalker/

Normally, we would never put a site that's essentially just a bunch of links into our Top 10. However, this collection, put together by Cathie Walker and Brian Leslie, contains links to some of the more interesting, odd and talked-about sites, from the classic Confession Booth to Games on the Internet. Most of the stuff is just a time waste, but at least it's quality time wasting.

FilmZone

http://www.filmzone.com/

From the people who brought you the Crash Site comes this stunning melange that aspires "to blend the timeless art of cinema with the experience of interactivity." What that means exactly is a mess of film news, downloadable clips, exclusive interviews and more, culled from mainstream, independent and foreign films. FilmZone eschews the puff to go behind the scenes searching for those who treat movies like an art form rather than a business, and has fun doing it.

New Power Network

http://130.161.36.8:80/npn/

Love him or hate him, the artist formerly known as Prince is nothing if not prolific. Check out this site and you'll quickly discover that his fans are as well: The New Power Network, based in the Netherlands, is closer to a subculture than a fan page. You really have to see this page to believe it: artwork and writing contributed by fans (most of it not bad), a comprehensive list of every song his Funkiness ever played anywhere (and you have to remember, this is a guy with a bank of 500 unreleased tunes), links to clubs and individual fans anywhere in the world, innumerable discussions and reviews, a comprehensive list of tour dates and aftershows, guitar and bass tablatures, and just about every other toy you can imagine.

On Hoops

http://www.onhoops.com/

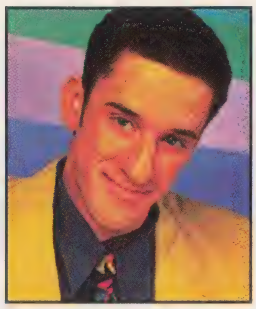
If you like your NBA news dished out with a dose of attitude, check out On Hoops. Maintained by Los Chucks, a pair of roundball junkies, On Hoops checks in with honest game analysis and general critiques of trends and players. Site highlights are the police blotter, detailing the inequities of NBA bad boys, and the chump roster where you can nominate your favorite journeyman a la Jim Les. (For more about On Hoops see page 80)

culture.watch

alt.

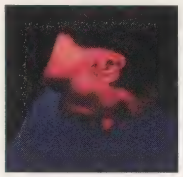
Mayim Bialik
a.k.a. "Blossom"
http://www.
rmplcco.uk./eduweb/
stes/alpine /mbialik.html

Good Lord No!



Dustin Diamond
a.k.a. "Screech"
http://www.nbc.com/
entertainment/shows/saved/bidiamond.html

Hall and Oates
Fan Page
http://cac.psu.edu/
~mal138/hall_oates/
hall_oates.html



John Waite Home Page
http://shakti.trincoll.edu/
~jgilbert/jwstuff/jwpage.html

The Mime Home Page
http://www-personal.umich.edu/~ryandhoz/mimes/

Sorry, due to bylaws set forth in the Geneva Accord of '64, IU is not authorized to print pictures of mimes. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause.

BARGAIN BIN

Pavlina
http://foothills.eznet.com/arabians/
abmnet/profiles/pavlina.html

If, like us, you've always felt that running down to the horse store was such an inconvenience, we have good news—you can now order a brand-spanking new (well, OK, so they're 8 or 9 years old) thoroughbred from Arab E Arabians, trainers of fine Arabian horses for 30 years and Web surfers for at least one. Our particular choice is Pavlina, a mare with a "long flexible neck, smooth balanced body, long level topline, deep croup and leggy build." (We hate those horses without flexible necks.) So if you have $5,500 to spare, drop a check off to Arab E Arabians in Washington and hop onto Pavlina for a nice trot. Assuming, of course, that they'll ship UPS.

Numbers on the 'Net

With love in the air, we searched Lycos for these famous couples:

Sonny - 1,388	Cher - 2,588
Bonnie - 3,386	Clyde - 2,194
Anthony - 1,115	Cleopatra - 912
Ross - 18,427	Rachel - 3,956
Homer - 16,714	Marge - 1,377

Netspeak

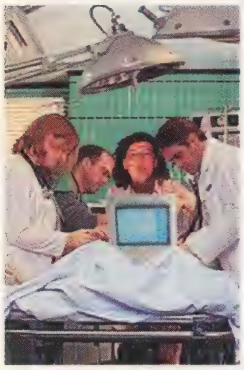
"Of course I'm doing my own typing! What do you think I am, a schmuck?"
-STING IN RESPONSE TO A FAN'S QUERY ON MR. SHOWBIZ

"No, we dislike MTV cause they don't overplay all our other videos. But we like MTV now that they don't play Paula Abdul."
-SOUNDGARDEN LEAD SINGER CHRIS CORNELL ON WHETHER THE SATURATION OF THE *BLACK HOLE SUN* VIDEO BOTHERED HIM ON AMERICA ONLINE

"Val Kilmer's batsuit was very sexy, with the codpiece. And I think Robin's codpiece was bigger than Val Kilmer's."
-BATMAN CREATOR BOB KANE ON THE COSTUME CHANGES IN *BATMAN FOREVER*, ON TIME-WARNER'S PATHFINDER

MUST-SEE TV?

It had to happen eventually. After Microsoft announced its deal with NBC to create an all-news channel, MSNBC, rumors about a possible minority purchase in NBC continued to fly. Is it only a matter of time before Microsoft sweeps the broadcasting giant into its orbit and pervades all of NBC's top hits? *IU* was recently leaked a top-secret memo outlining NBC's fall lineup.



MSER

Episode 38: The Poisoned Apple

The tension at County General runs high when cranky chief resident Dr. Kerry Weaver adds a Microsoft technical support wing to the hospital. The doctors manage as best they can, racing from broken disk drives to stalled operating systems, until all the Macintoshes in the hospital crash, erasing all of the patients' records. Thankfully, new Chief Surgeon Dr. Will Gates is around to install Windows 95™ and save the day, except that a guy with a meathook in his chest doesn't make it.

FRIENDS 96

Episode 49: The One When Ross Trips and Falls Over

Things get wacky in the season premiere when Billy, the geeky older brother of Monica, shows up and gets punched out by Chandler for mocking his job. Ross trips over a cable and disconnects Rachel from her modem, cutting her off from MSN™, but Billy recovers just in time to show her how to use Windows 95™ to recover that file she'd been downloading. In an unrelated subplot, Joey gets shot.

MSNFELD

Episode 111: The Contest

Jerry, Kramer, George, Elaine and their newfound buddy Bill all make a bet about who's really master of their domain: The first one to buy out or announce a major deal with another corporation owes the others a nickel. Double entendres fly as everyone thinks Bill will be the first to give in, but he manages to wait it out for nearly half a day, when Kramer breaks down and buys Kraft.

UNSOLVED MYSTERIES WITH BILL GATES

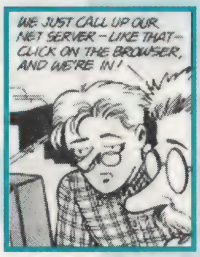
Episode 67: Don't Ask about Paul Allen

Whatever happened to IBM's O/S? Why is it so hard to configure Netscape with Windows 95™? And why does Microsoft Word™ add an accent aigu to café but no accent grave to voila? No one really has the answer to any of these questions...except for Bill Gates. Join television's spookiest host as he delves into computing's most enigmatic corners, like what the heck the difference is between a Recycling Bin and a Trash Can.

Http://TV.magazine.com
Selected references to the 'net in those

OTHER MEDIUMS

COMICS GO CYBER?



With the 'net making big headlines in the news, then the business section of one of our local papers, the *Chicago Tribune*, it shouldn't have come as such a surprise when the Web invaded the comics section, too. In the week of Nov. 26, four different comics had 'net gags: *Dilbert*, *Doonesbury*, *Fox Trot* and *Mother Goose and Grimm*. Several other comics either offered e-mail or Web site addresses. It's not coincidental that the more tech-savvy comics were also the funniest (*Terry and the Pirates* the notable exception). We'll never believe the 'net has fully infiltrated the comics page until we see Broom Hilda trolling the chatrooms.

GILLIGAN'S X-BAND

While most Internet companies struggle to portray their products as cutting edge, IBM has taken a curious route in hyping its Internet Connection software: hiring spokesman Bob Denver, a.k.a. Gilligan, as pitchman. The theme of the ads is that with IBM's products you'll never be stranded. Denver seemed like an odd choice as a spokesperson, until we remembered a "lost" episode from Gilligan's third season in which the Professor fashioned a crude Internet hook-up using a filling from Mary Ann's tooth, the radio, some loose string, and of course, coconut shells. The Professor was just about to e-mail the Coast Guard for help when Gilligan rushed in and tripped on a rock, smashing the crude computer and thwarting yet another sure-fire rescue.

NET LINE

INTELLIGENCE REPORT: NEWS FROM THE UNDERGROUND

Average number of **informal "beer bash" gatherings** held each month on AOL: 2

Number of **words potentially vulgar** enough to elicit a warning on AOL: 90

Total number of **Internet domain names** added in one month, ending in December: 18,945

Paging Dr. Solomon

Renowned virus-hunter Alan Solomon says that the major barrier to stopping their spread may be the U.S.

When Christopher Pile, a.k.a. the Black Baron, bragged on a BBS that he'd written a virus called SMEG, the furthest thought from his mind was a jail term. After all, no one on the planet had ever been locked up for creating a computer virus, even though England has had the Computer Misuse Act on the books since 1990. After a routine round of call tracing, however, Pile was brought in, prosecuted and thrown in jail for 18 months. It was the first such decision ever made by a judge.

The man brought in to pinpoint the virus and aid the prosecution was Dr. Alan Solomon, chairman and founder of S&S Software International and designer of Dr. Solomon's Anti-Virus Toolkit. Though the police did the detective work (aided significantly by the fact that Pile posted to a public forum), Solomon's role was vital: In addition to reporting each outbreak, Solomon's team needed to identify the virus exactly in order for the legal case to hold.

Unfortunately, this may prove to be an isolated conviction. According to Solomon, the problem of viruses may be worsening, due in part to the global nature of viruses and the Internet; add to this difficulties with prosecution, and you've got a potentially explosive situation. And this situation, though international in consequence, is in no small part due to the neglect of one country: the United States.

England's law, as became evident with the prosecution of Pile, treats violators harshly. The U.S., however, is much weaker when it comes to dealing with viruses—no concrete laws have been passed or enforced to deal with the problem. "Before you can have a prosecution, there has to be a crime," explains Solomon. "There are people in the U.S. selling CD-ROMs containing thousands of viruses, there are people running Web sites containing hundreds or thousands of viruses. No one has even considered mounting a prosecution against these people, whose addresses are publicly available."

Solomon points out that up until recently, even the U.S. federal government made viruses available for download—via their AIS service, "the U.S. Department of the Treasury (Bureau of the Public Debt) was making hundreds of viruses available to all and sundry." A quick skim through alt.comp.virus (a group to which Solomon frequently posts)

reveals that viruses are available in easily accessible compilations or, for that matter, for download off the newsgroup. "I have a limited number of these CDs," read one post. "They have over 5,000 viruses (F-PROT 2.20 counts over 2,200 different strains) plus every virus maker/virus magazine/PHRACK issue." The remainder of the response thread argues not about the legality of distributing viruses, but about whether or not this guy should be selling someone else's work. Obviously these people are not quaking in their boots over getting caught.

Without some kind of concerted U.S. effort, the spread of viruses is likely to increase. "There's nothing that will slow the problem down, and plenty to make it worse," suggests Solomon. "The international community is making efforts; unfortunately, very little seems to be happening in the U.S. The main problem caused by the Internet is that a U.S. local problem (lack of laws where other countries do have laws) gives problems elsewhere."

In order to stop viruses that do a lot of damage, such as Form and Empire.Monkey, the United States needs laws comparable to the rest of the world.

"If it were illegal, then at least some of them would stop it, and others would be driven underground, which is a much better situation than we have now," says Solomon. His suggestion until then? "Get a good antivirus and use it."

Death for the PC?

IBM, Oracle and Sun aim to make the Internet computer a reality

When IBM built the first mainframes 30 years ago, computing power was centralized, dependent upon one enormous machine piping information to a bevy of brainless terminals. After that came PCs, individual desktops that contained all of the computing power of the behemoths that preceded them. Now, if you listen to executives at Oracle, Sun Microsystems and IBM, we're about to come full circle.

Make way for the Internet computer. The concept of networked dummy machines has captured a fair amount of attention, mainly because these things are cheap—the magic number being bandied about is around $500. No hard drives or CD-ROMs here: All you get, for a mere half a grand, is a dummy terminal attached to the biggest centralized network of them all—the Internet.

Oracle is launching the biggest pitch for Internet computers, operating under the assumption that users can get all of the commonly used applications they need straight from the Internet. Oracle's Vice President of Network Computing Andy Laursen sees the market as potentially unlimited, capturing all the same niches as the Internet and appealing to those users who consume information but don't publish it. "We're seeing a shift from the current client/server paradigm to a consumer/producer paradigm," says Laursen. "These are people who are essentially using their computers to get their jobs done, not publish applications."

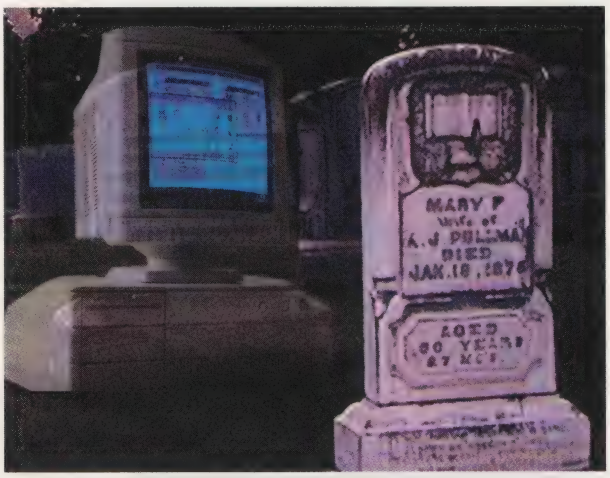
Sun's target audience for Internet computers is more focused. Sun spokesman George Paolini, believes these machines appeal primarily to businesses. After all, the most significant computing cost for most companies isn't the initial purchase, but maintenance: Estimated cost for PC upkeep (including opportunity costs for users who can't do anything else until they figure out the operating system) ranges from $4,000 to $11,000 a year. 'Net computers would be significantly cheaper to sustain. "We see the demand being for simple machines with a professionally maintained network," explains Paolini. "We're creating these terminals to do basically one thing: go out and find information."

The major selling points with these systems are simplicity and cost. Sun, Oracle and IBM all hope to have machines out in 1996 (although Sun emphasizes that they're still in the "investigation stage," meaning that if it doesn't fly, they can back out), with initial costs probably hovering around $500 for the most basic system. The technology is there—recent developments like LSI Logic's Internet on a Chip architecture allow all the applications needed for the Internet to reside on one $50 chip. But is there really a market for dummy boxes? After all, who wants to give up their PC?

No one, argues Paolini—this is a supplemental market rather than a replacement one. "We're trying to dispel the notion that this is a PC killer of some sort," explains the Sun spokesman. "There will always be a place for PCs." Both LSI and Oracle agree that the success of these machines depends on how quickly desktop-type applications are written for the Internet, and both are optimistic that developers will take advantage of the 'net's open-ended architecture.

"There's zero cost of entry to be in the software distribution business right now," says Brian Halla, LSI Logic's executive vice president of products.

Oracle's Laursen agrees: "The Internet has shown that given an open environment and a low-cost entry point, people will write a lot of interesting stuff." They'd better—Oracle, Sun, IBM and LSI are counting on it.



Number that were **registered as .com**: 17,389

Number that were **registered as .edu**: 42

Number that were **registered in Manhattan**: 860

Number of **domain names owned** by Kraft: 154

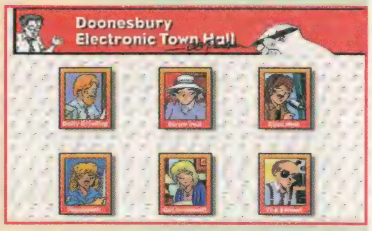
Statistics courtesy of America Online and InterNIC.

Lovin' the Java Jive

The Internet universe seems to thrive on buzzwords. Netscape held the crown for a while, but the prodigal son as of late has clearly been Java, that Sun Microsystems wonder that even local bully Microsoft conceded it needs to license. Wall Street invests in it, Bill Gates needs it and journalists fawn over it, but most people don't really understand what it is. What exactly does Java do, and why is it such a big deal? Is it really going to wrest the programming market away from Microsoft, as Sun, IBM, Netscape and the rest of Java's allies hope?

Yes and no. It certainly has all the tools. Basically, Java is a programming language not all that different from C++, except that it's centered on the Internet and much simpler to use. Like C++, Java is object oriented, meaning that sound, video or animation can be run as applets (a small application loaded every time you use it) and easily folded into a home page. Add to this the fact that Java is platform-independent, and you've got a seriously subversive situation brewing. Java allows any machine to use the same applets, regardless of its O/S, which, understandably, looks threatening to Microsoft. But don't count Microsoft out yet—the fact that they're licensing Java means that they understand the challenge.

Mixed Media

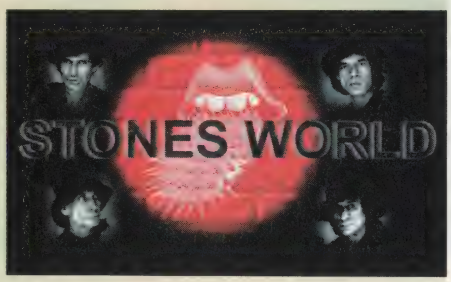


A real Electronic Town Hall...sort of

Dilbert may be the reigning comic-strip-on-the-Internet champ, but Gary Trudeau's *Doonesbury* is making quite a push. After showing his 'net savvy in a series of strips about the Web, Trudeau's gone multimedia with http://www.doonesbury.com/, a site taking the form of the Doonesbury Electronic Town Hall. With a chat room, daily news updates exhorting visitors to "join the fight against cluelessness," flashbacks to old episodes of the comic and straw polls, the Electronic Town Hall has a much sharper political edge than most sites. Of course, what else would you expect from Trudeau?

Move over Mona, here comes Magneto

With all of those highfalutin galleries on the Web, it was about time that someone put up a good site devoted to illustration art and animation. The Spiderwebart Gallery (http://www.spiderwebart.com/index.htm) offers everything from comic-book sketches to enormous paintings, most in the fantasy/science-fiction genre, though you can find a few Donald Ducks if you look hard enough. Most of this stuff isn't cheap, but, then again, neither is *The Last Supper*, and you can't order from the Louvre online.



A site of wealth and taste

They're not as young as they once were, but the Rolling Stones continue to push the multimedia edge, keeping ahead of the curve on the online front. After performing in the first streamable online concert last year, the Stones recently unveiled an official Web site (http://www.stonesworld.com) that puts most systems and connections to shame. Unless you're at the top of the technological pecking order, you won't be able to experience all of the toys—all of the streamable songs, for instance, require "ISDN or faster." (or faster? We'd be happy just with ISDN.) You can even take on the Stones at poker, though it's only five-card stud—we were really hoping to engage Mick in a hand of seven-card baseball.

All in the ImagiNation

Online Gaming takes a huge step with INN

You haven't seen how far online gaming has come until you've checked out the ImagiNation Network. Despite all the buzz, actual multiplayer simulations on the Internet are pretty far off; the chaos of the Web's structure and disparities between systems don't translate well to fast-moving entertainment. The ImagiNation Network, however, was built entirely with gaming in mind, and is therefore better equipped to handle the difficult task of keeping the simulations high-quality and fast. The results so far are impressive.

The ImagiNation Network works as a separate online service, closer to America Online than the Web, though eventually it hopes to interact with both. Users pay for blocks of time, averaging out to about $2 an hour, and then sign on like any other service, though the difference between INN and others becomes evident immediately: The interface is both homier and simpler than other services, allowing users to click from building to building for various games and chats.

A whole array of gaming options awaits visitors to INN. Users can head to the Casino for a quick game of poker, over to MedievaLand for some adventure gaming, and then end up at the Arena for a little 3-D golf. INN has gained a lot of press recently with the launch of Front Page Sports: Football Online, a simulation allowing players to hit the gridiron against players scattered throughout the country, and it's easy to see why; though the game doesn't have precise player action (you watch the plays after you call them), the graphics are solid, the strategies myriad, and the opponents a lot more entertaining than a computer. If you're more the cerebral type, you can always pull out the chessboard and challenge a player in New York. If you just want to wreak havoc, hop into a plane in Free-for-All Red Baron and blast someone down. The draw of all of these games, and INN in general, is the interactivity; rather than just taking on a simulation, you're playing against a real person

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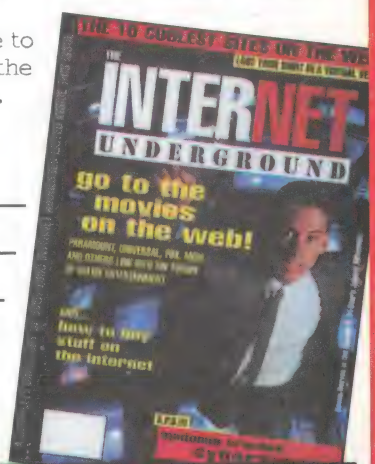

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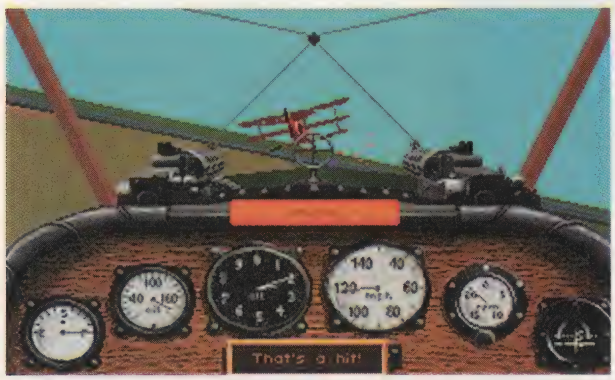
somewhere in the online universe. Simulations like The Ruins of Cawdor, INN's newest role-playing adventures, benefit enormously from the multiuser environment—it's like a fantasy MUD where you actually get to witness the combat.

The pleasant graphical interface, allowing you to design your own appearance along with the simple chat function, allow you to trash-talk as you're playing to heighten the experience. Users can change their avatars to fit their whims; everything from the shape of one's nose to hair color is malleable, allowing a general approximation of one's appearance (though these tend to be flattering more often than not). The trash-talking is even more entertaining; just type in a few words like "you're going down, boy" and the insults appear at the bottom of your opponent's screen.

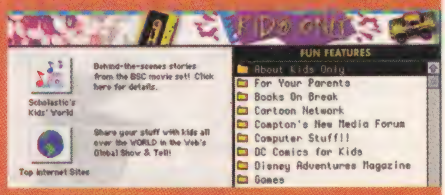
"What we want to turn into is the amusement park where online users go to have fun and be entertained," says Dean DeBiase, president of the ImagiNation Network. With new games coming online weekly and expansion onto other platforms not too far in the future, the service should only continue to grow. The only drawback to INN so far is the cost; with the amount of time people are putting into this, they should at least be able to shell out a good wad of cash for unlimited access. If addiction to INN weren't so expensive, they could easily take advantage of their unique position at the forefront of the technology. INN already has the service—whether or not they can broaden their appeal remains to be seen.



Online Service Stop

And stay out of the Barney chat room!

America Online is certainly doing its best to cement itself as the "kid-friendly" online service. After several months of imbroglios centered around naughty words, AOL recently unveiled advanced parental controls that basically keep kids away from anything that could be potentially offensive. Though AOL insists that its new Parental Control feature gives adults greater choice, the choice is similar to the old voting rules in the U.S.S.R.: You vote for the one person on the ballot. Parental Control, when enabled, allows children access just to the Kids Only channel, provider of such fun worlds as Blackberry Creek and Nickelodeon. Guess most tykes aren't quite ready for *Time Online*.



MSN to WWW?

With all of the mergers and strategies being delivered in the last few months by Microsoft, it was easy to miss what was potentially the most startling: Bill Gates announced in December that the Microsoft Network ultimately will become an Internet site. No, not an Internet site in addition to an online service—it will become just an Internet site, with content available for a small fee. Though he didn't say when this would happen, this is quite a concession for the new heavyweight on the circuit—MSN has, by most accounts, been doing relatively well, with over 525,000 subscribers signed on by the end of last year. Nonetheless, Gates acknowledged in his announcement that the Internet is becoming the core for online activity, and the traditional online service model will need to adapt.

This service not enhanced for 3.0

RealAudio and Java might be the center of attention on the Web, but you won't see them on AOL anytime soon. Neither stream audio nor Java will be useable in AOL 3.0, the new version of AOL's software coming out this month. Both, however, are planned for the future, as well as VRML, HTML and other enhancements currently absent from the software, though no real timetable has been laid down. AOL's efforts have lately been aimed more at content than tools; in addition to a slew of recent deals with providers from Warner Bros. to Time Inc. (hey, what a coincidence), AOL is also concentrating on the Greenhouse, a developer's forum for entrepreneurs.

Hey, nice avatar

Companies like Worlds Inc. and Time Warner add a new dimension to chat

One problem with cyberspace is that it doesn't actually feel like a space—it feels more like an impossibly long roll of microfilm with really fast scrolling potential. As well designed as some home pages may be, the experience of surfing still centers on reading from a screen. Cyberspace, in a more accurate description, should probably be cyber-shelf: a lot of content, but it's pretty flat.

This is about to change fast. 3-D is popping up right and left, with VRML tours and downloadable 3-D video clips available at an increasing number of sites. But where 3-D is really about to shift the current paradigm is in the Internet's equivalent of a social life: the chat room.

The Web has never really managed to get chat right—the commercial online services reign supreme in this realm, realizing long ago that two of the major things people like to do while online are pontificate and hit on each other. But chat has been mostly two-dimensional (in more ways than one), and users' identities were split along two lines: the face they presented on their Web page and the identity they carved in chat space.

A number of new programs attempt to merge the two identities by allowing users to create a 3-D home in chat space. Worlds Inc., a San Francisco-based virtual reality firm, led the charge last spring with the creation of WorldsChat, a realm in which users are given a 3-D representation, called an avatar, and zoom around in a pseudo-space station conversing with other avatars. The disadvantage of WorldsChat is that users exist in a kind of purgatory—there's no way to really define yourself except with your avatar, and unless you pay for increased functionality (the base program is free), you'll look pretty much like five or six other people floating around the room.

Worlds Inc.'s new product, Alphaworld, aims to change that. Where Worlds Chat focuses on discourse as the major appeal of the program, Alphaworld makes chat only the means for interaction in a 3-D environment decorated with homes and avatars populated and built by users. Rather than have a home page, users can now have an actual home. Individuals can put up bushes, cages, sheds or anything else they think might represent themselves (for example, a Greenpeace site might be represented by a tree), and not only can buildings be explored from Alphaworld, they can also link to the Web, making the transition from Alphaworld to the Web seamless in the same surfing session. Because Worlds Inc. realizes that Alphaworld is unlikely to replace the Web, they've made the interaction between the two smooth and kept the costs of Alphaworld as low as possible. "By their very presence, our customers are in a very large and real way our content providers as well," explains Worlds Inc.'s Rob Schmults, "It definitely behooves us to have a lot of people coming in and using it, and we want to have as few barriers as possible."

Alphaworld's functionality goes a step beyond WorldsChat, with a lot of toys thrown in to entice users further. For example, all sound in Alphaworld is proximity sound—if a music clip plays from a stereo on the balcony of someone's home, the tune gets louder as you approach the house. This kind of attention to detail, combined with Alphaworld's cross-functionality with the Web, is what Schmults hopes will draw users. "What I really like about Alphaworld is the expandability," says Schmults. "We hope that users will take it over and make it their own. I like to think that Worlds Inc. could go out of business, and as long as someone kept the service up, Alphaworld would continue to grow."

Of course, the key point with this is that someone has to keep the service up—Alphaworld may be defined by the users, but it still exists in a space run by Worlds Inc. Time Warner Interactive's Palace program, however, makes the user into the server. A shared-space architecture might be maintained by Palace, but each individual's site is kept on his or her own computer. Once you download the program and create your avatar, you simply fire up your modem and Palace's directory is notified that you're online. If you log off, you exit the directory. Like Worlds Inc., TWi is keeping the entrance fee low—you can either browse for free or pay one $20 fee to get the server software and permanent connection to the Palace system. Of course, all of these programs require you to keep your local Internet account, but beyond that, the cost is borne mainly by advertisers.

The Palace architecture, however, concentrates more on chat than on content. Where Alphaworld hopes to create a way to browse the Internet in 3-D, Palace hopes to create a decent home for interaction. TWi's director of online ventures, Mark Jeffrey, sees Palace sites complementing, rather than replacing, the Web. "The Web is great for a lot of things, like text, but it's not inherently multi-user," explains Jeffrey. "For things that are inherently multiuser, chat in particular, this is a much better environment."

Judging a book by its cover?

One of the advantages of text-based chat is the ability to render appearances obsolete—until, of course, the big day that F2F occurs. For the most part, however, you're judged solely on the basis of your typing skills, your ability to fabricate, and if someone's really perceptive, your domain name. 3-D, however, creates an entirely different atmosphere, bringing a physical manifestation back into play in the form of your avatar. This might seem silly, since this is obviously not what these people look like (WorldsChat, after all, lets you become a technicolor fish) but judgments based on avatars are definitely prevalent. Not only did I try several different avatars with several different names to gauge reactions, I also asked a number of people on WorldsChat whether or not impressions made a difference in cyberspace. Each one insisted that they did: one surfer going under the alias "Honeybunch" insisted that "avatars portray the inner self," whereas another named Alissa felt that "maneuvering is easier, but I'm turned off by some avatars." Some even felt that 3-D interaction brings back the fears that chat used to erase: One student going under the alias "Trouble" admitted "I don't like the 3-D part. It reminds me of a party where I'm afraid to talk to anyone." -JW

Internet stocks: Bull market or B.S.?

When Netscape made its initial public offering last year, analysts and the public alike were shocked at the jump it made in just one day: offered at $28, the stock closed at a staggering $71.

Now, in six months of trading, market darling Netscape has shot as high as $170 before coming out of the stratosphere to a more reasonable $120 as of mid-December. Netscape isn't alone in this spectacular performance; Spyglass, which opened at a mere $17, rocketed to $112 before settling in at a still substantial $86. Netcom exploded from $19 to almost $100 before coming down to around $50.

Though the initial frenzy has settled a bit, Wall Street is still welcoming anything Internet-related as the next great market coup. Even if no one who works in the markets really understands the 'net, they certainly understand the numbers, and these numbers represent some serious cash.

However, many investors question whether the Internet's Midas touch is actually a case of the emperor's new clothes. With this kind of precedent, is it realistic to expect this level of growth to continue? The answer depends on factors that may or may not be beyond the companies' control. Right now, Internet stocks benefit from the general health of the market. If the Dow continues to soar above 5000, and the technology market in general continues to expand, Internet stocks will follow the bull market's lead. A major tumble, however, could see a disproportionate correction in the Internet arena. "These stocks are on the cutting edge of technology," says Gami. "But they're also on the cutting edge of volatility. A major outside force could cause people to bail."

Assuming that no substantial market correction occurs, however, Internet stocks should continue to garner fat investments from market managers who see dollar signs with every icon. Which companies to pick, however, is still a tough call—Netscape and Spyglass may be the equivalents of blue chips in this new market, but unless they find a new revenue stream fast, they may be overvalued. "Where does it end?" asks Javier Rojas of Broadview & Associates, a mergers and acquisitions firm. "What is Netscape at, $3 billion, $4 billion today? For a company that did $16 million in revenues last year, that's a little out of whack. It's got a great future, but prices are a bit out of sight right now. You might see a bit of a backlash."

Gone but not forgotten

Controversy over a new service calls attention to Usenet archiving

The impression of Usenet is that it's a temporary medium. Anyone who's spent time trying to track down the beginning of a thread knows that messages never last long, and once they disappear, they're gone to that great newsfeeder in the sky, never to be seen again. Right?

Wrong. Though it comes as a surprise to many users, newsgroups are continually archived in a number of ways, meaning that just about every message ever posted is on record somewhere. Feeling guilty about that alt.fetish.diapers post? Well, chances are it won't ever pop up again, but someone has it, either at the NSA or on CD-ROM or on one of an increasing number of archival services.

Much of the recent attention given to archiving stems from the emergence of Dejanews, a San Antonio-based company that provides a Web site with literally thousands of posts available. Searchers can find posts by topic, keyword or even author, which makes some 'net surfers nervous; the fact that one can type in a name and find everything they've posted recently seems to many users a breach of privacy. "What I think worries people—and especially USAicans, with special sensibilities regarding 'probable cause' and such—is that archives of long-past postings will be scanned for damaging material," explains Cameron Laird, creator of a Web site linking together all publicly available archives. The fact that Usenet seems temporary enhances the flavor of the medium by freeing up discourse, many users argue, and a compilation reduces that level of freedom.

This argument, however, seems ludicrous to most archivers. "If people who post to Usenet newsgroups thought that they were doing anything private, then they didn't understand what they were doing," says George Nickas, user liaison for Dejanews. Nickas feels that many react negatively to Dejanews not because it's the first company to do this, but because it's the most public. Private companies and citizens, as well as the government, have been keeping Usenet feeds since its inception. Many newsfeeders have complete records dating back to 1979, and as the tools to keep feeds get cheaper, more individuals will get in on the act; Laird sees the next step as CD-ROMs with yearly compilations of high-level hierarchies. "I'm not going to make a business of that, but I could, and I bet someone will," says Laird.

Compared to more secretive systems, Nickas sees Dejanews as a step in the right direction simply because it's publicly available. At least users now know that they're being archived, and both Laird and Nickas hope that awareness of Usenet's permanence might improve its level of dialogue. "Most of these posts are fire-and-forget things," explains Nickas. "People don't take as much responsibility as they would in the real world."

The reality of the situation seems to be that archiving is here to stay, but the truer reality is that it always has been; it's only now that people are starting to notice it. Archiving is held back only by the limitations of the technology, but storage capacities are increasing fast. For example, the only reason that Dejanews hasn't included the popular alt hierarchy is because the groups take up an enormous amount of space, but the hardware is just about in place—alt should be available for download in 1996. Eventually, Dejanews hopes to include all posts dating back to the beginning of Usenet. Laird believes that the mindset of the consumer just needs to catch up with the realities of archiving. "The tools are here, now," says Laird. "The next step will be in the collective head of netizens, as we come to some awareness of what archives mean to us." So before you fire off that flame to alt.bitterness, you'd best heed Nickas' warning: "If you don't want your wife, girlfriend or boss to read it, don't post it."

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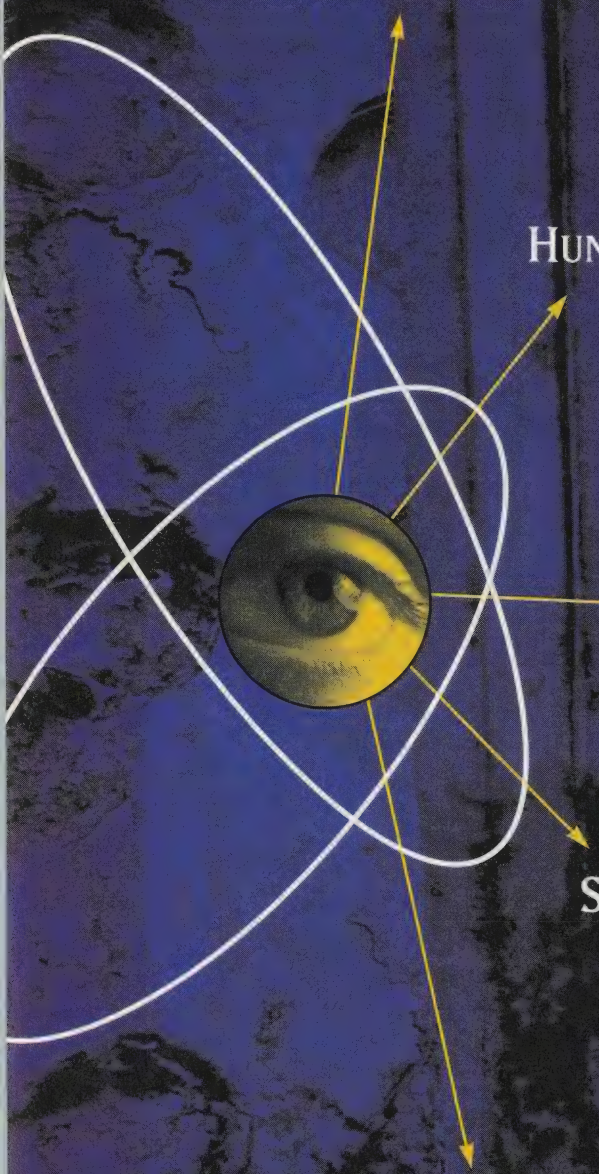

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>.IU insider

Microsoft hardball

The Department of Justice is spending a good amount of time looking into nasty allegations against Microsoft, which seems to be a major facet of their job over the last few years. Microsoft has been accused of blocking other Internet browsers by disabling them via a new version of Winsock, a seemingly minor file that works with Microsoft's Internet Explorer, but not other browsers. The feds have subpoenaed Netscape and CompuServe, among others. The major issue: Is it an intentional blockage or a software glitch? It seems to us a programmer would noticed something like Windows 95 disabling other browsers, but then again, a Microsoft glitch is certainly not unheard of. One reader noticed a function of Windows 95 that, though not illegal, is also a bit insidious. Wrote our observant patron: "I just discovered when I was setting up Windows 95 that the software comes with the ability to automatically uninstall three pieces of software with one click—Windows 3.1, which makes sense, and Windows 95, which I suppose does as well. The third is Netscape Navigator."

Separated at Birth?

Like a bad bit of deja vu, we knew we'd seen that layout somewhere when we saw the design of *Websight* (left), one of our competitors. Then we picked up an old *Entertainment Weekly* (right).

No more Candy

CandyMan's CandyLand, the subject of a profile in our January issue, was recently shut down by its service provider, MCSNet of Chicago. (Incidentally, the same provider that *IU* uses.)

Rumors abounded that the shuttering of the site, an archive of bombing and hacking information, was related to MCSNet's contemporaneous decision to drop the newsgroups alt.warez and alt.cracks as well as some pornographic binaries groups. Chicago-area newsgroups bitterly debated censorship issues and many ominously noted CandyMan's absence.

Karl Denninger, president of MCSNet, told *IU* that the closing of CandyMan's account was absolutely not content-related, and that MCSNet has, in fact, often defended the Web site in the past from those wishing to censor it. Denninger emphasized that CandyMan's material, while controversial, is completely legal. Denninger reported that CandyMan had seriously violated a terms of service contract that led to the cancellation, but that the nature of the violation was confidential. Denninger emphasized that the dismissal was voluntary and that CandyMan chose to shut down rather than have his account "inspected." *Internet Underground* hasn't heard CandyMan's side of the story, since his access to e-mail has been cut off. We await the resurrection of his Web site and look forward to welcoming him back from his hiatus.

Where's the Juice?

Stumbled across any good domains lately? Toronto-based Convoke Communications Corp. recently tested the effectiveness of domain names by registering www.oj.com, and then sitting back and waiting for hits. The site wasn't linked at all—the only way you could find it was by guessing the URL. At the very least, we fell for it.

A blow for suck

We were as surprised as anyone when the online 'zine *suck* fell prey to corporate takeover when it sold out to *HotWired* the day before we went to press. (*Suck* was *IU*'s No. 1 Web site in January.) We thought that a 'zine as cutting-edge and anti-establishment as *suck* would reject the embrace of a large media company, and evidently we weren't the only people who felt this way. James Quick took the opportunity to shed new light on the topic with *blow* (http://www.naples.net/-nfno3457/blow.html), a picture-perfect parody of the *suck* site. "*Suck* seemed to me (at the time) to be the least likely candidate for this kind of appropriation," says Quick. "So it was in the spirit of *suck* that I did the parody."

'net nomenclature: Little Snippets of Slang

Dragnet - trying to browse on an unusually slow connection.

FAQtigue - the point at which one becomes hopelessly bored while reading an overly detailed FAQ.

Merit Badge - an icon of one of several arbiters of cool (the Point, CSOD) that's really just a glorified hyperlink.

Frownload - a program which you can't get to execute after you've wasted an hour downloading it.

do we really need to know?

You ask it, they'll answer it

http://bristol.onramp.net/cgi-bin/poll/get_questions

This site was created by Bristol Database Resources Inc. as an example of how their technology can make your site a better place. Rather than simply serving as an example, though, the unscientific poll in which visitors can pose questions and vote "yes" or "no" has become a fascinating window into the psyche of the 'net. With questions that range from politics to religion to the purely ridiculous, this one humble survey is a looking glass to the amorphous personality of the Internet. Here is a sample of questions recently taken from the site.

Should we cancel the drug war and start to think about a realistic solution?
Yes: 38 No: 26

Should the U.S. send troops to Bosnia?
Yes: 47 No: 96

Who is smarter, Lisa Simpson or Jan Brady?
Yes: 64 No: 17

Should France stop performing nuclear tests ?
Yes: 95 No: 22

I've put up the last four questions. If I told you my address, would you mail me?
accent@euronet.nl (nl means "I'm from Holland")
Yes: 21 No: 67

Can you help me?
Yes: 15 No: 60

Do you think Bill Gates is too rich?
Yes: 52 No: 34

Is 42 the ultimate answer?
Yes: 31 No: 18

Is Courteney Cox more attractive than Jennifer Aniston?
Yes: 21 No: 27

May I ask a question?
Yes: 22 No: 25

Did you know that the original sin was actually just the universe becoming aware of itself?
Yes: 10 No: 37

Do you know what country Saskatchewan is in?
Yes: 60 No: 5

Who here hates non-yes and -no questions in here?
Yes: 11 No: 7

Should states introduce age restrictions (21 or older) to buy or use a graphing calculator?
Yes: 10 No: 11

Have you ever been abducted by a UFO?
Yes: 6 No: 14

Have you got T.P. for me bunghole?!?
Yes: 12 No: 3

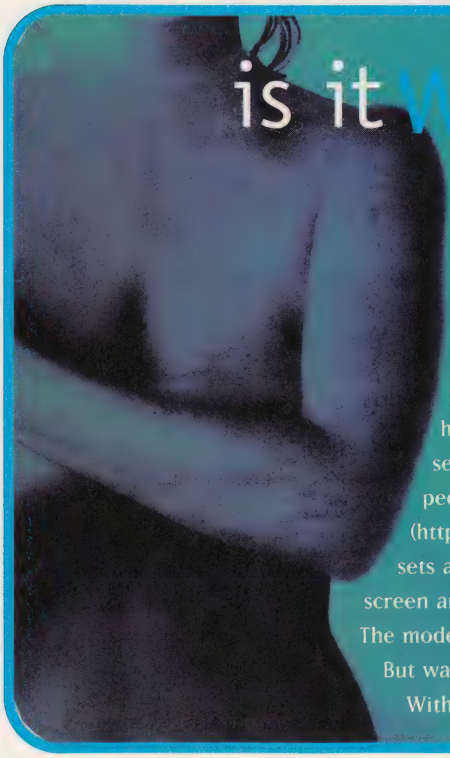
Do you like *Knight Rider* and think there should be more TV like that now?
Yes: 5 No: 12

Are you going to eat the rest of that?
Yes: 6 No: 2

If you are a woman in Arkansas, have you been sexually harassed by Bill Clinton (yet)?
Yes: 2 No: 2

WHO OUT THERE THINKS THIS QUESTIONNAIRE SHOULD BE SHORTENED RIGHT AWAY?
Yes: 8 No: 1

is it worth it?



Video Fantasy

Sex always seems to be at the forefront of technology—the renting of skin flicks did, after all, drive the proliferation of the VCR in the early 1980s—so it should come as no surprise that live video over the Internet has been pioneered by entrepreneurs selling the equivalent of a high-tech peepshow. Video Fantasy (http://www.videofantasy.com/) basically sets a woman (no men yet) in front of a screen and has her cater to your every wish. The model we saw certainly didn't disappoint. But was it worth it? Well, it wasn't cheap. With a startup fee of around thirty bucks and a $5-a-minute charge, there are many cheaper sources of titillation. Live video does provide a unique kick, however; The fact that she responds to your actual wishes adds a level of interactivity absent from, say, *Juggs Magazine*. And compared to that other staple of dial-a-porn, phone sex, live video has enormous advantages; first and foremost, the model performing for us was extremely attractive, and when she said, "I'm taking my bra off," it was pretty clear that she was. The price, though steep when compared to renting *Riding Miss Daisy*, beats trolling Sunset Boulevard for your own personal Divine Brown (not even to mention safety concerns), and the cost isn't that much pricier than a 900 number. If you have the cash and want to broaden your cybersex horizons, it's worth checking out—The dialogue, or at least its believability, beats an AOL chat room anyday. But if you're gonna do this a lot, forget it—you'll go broke before she gets a chance to use the zoom lens.

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weird ON THE WEB

Aisle One of Spatula City

http://www.wam.umd.edu/~twoflowr/aisle1.htm

As a whole Spatula City, a fictional superstore, offers a wide variety of bizarre original content and links to strange places. Organized into wide, brigthly lit aisles, Aisle One is where the site's true colors show, as an impressive display of the latest advances in spatula technology are exhibited for the discerning utensil customer. Here you can find everything from the basic model ("perfect for ordinary day-to-day spatula needs at ordinary cooking temperatures") to the noticeably more advanced TMI-3 Fission Reactor/Spatula ("Harness the power of the atom and watch burgers go from raw to well-done in a matter of seconds"). You say you want interactivity? Would-be inventors can even submit their own spatuala designs.

The Toilet Page

http://minyos.xx.rmit.edu.au/~s9507658/toilet/index.html

If you've ever wondered what makes a good public toilet (though most people have probably solidified their opinion on this by now), Nathan Jones, an enterprising young Aussie, has visited a number of public toilets in Australia and rated them in terms of cleanliness, openness, lighting, and hand-dryer warmth. Thank God the Web was around to provide a forum for this kind of hard-hitting journalism: "A lot of effort has been put into maintaining the paths and landscaping around the lake and I was pleased to see that the toilet block didn't miss out on the attention. The first thing you notice is the spotlessness of the toilets. The toilet paper holders moved freely and the toilet seats were clean. In the men's toilet, they used the basin style of urinal and one of them was positioned lower down for children." Watch out Henry James—travel writing may never be the same.

Elvis in Latin: Frequently Asked Questions

A pairing anyone will love, this site offers up all you need to know about a CD featuring Latin translations of some of the King's greatest hits. Unfortunately Elvis himself did not have the foresight before his untimely demise to record his classics in this dead tounge, but filling that void is Dr. Jukka Ammondt and the Finnish Broadcast Corporation Choir. Their recent release *Legend Lives Forever* in Latin contains seven Presley classics like "Non adamare non possum" and "Tenere me ama." The site also features instructions for ordering the site from K-Tel. Really, this is *not* a joke.

http://www.cs.uoregon.edu/~bhelm/misc/elvis.html

Banana Labels of the World

In the category of "if they make it someone will collect it" let us present a site dedicated to an amazing collection of banana stickers. Lest you think this a singular obsession, we also found no less than three other sites of banana stickers, but Ilkka Havukkala's stood out as the ripest of the bunch. Organized alphabetically, the breadth of this international collection from "Aloha Island Fresh" to "Yes! Dominican Republic Bananas" is truly something to behold. The one's with the most appeal? Banambo from Japan and the old stand-by Chiquita.

http://www.staff.or.jp/whoiswho/ilkka/bananadir/bananalabels.html

World Wide Commercial Telepathy Mind Networks

http://www.magna.com.au/~rwin/ldhp.html

OK, we're not going to write this site up—we're going to sit here and think about it, and you should be able to receive our opinion telepathically. Hmmmmmmm...Strange, it doesn't seem to be working. Evidently we'll just have to sign up for their Mind Network, where thousands of people hang out on a telepathic plane and (according to the pictures at the top of their page) think about Kathy Ireland and Tiny Toons. This site insists upon the scientific merit of telepathy, though enlightenment isn't cheap—the first book weighs in at 30 bucks and goes up from there. Of course, if you already know telepathy, you have a leg up: "If you DO KNOW, then as you study this home page, fix an image in your mind: a cafe, an attractive woman sitting at a table and drinking a milkshake through a yellow straw. This image conveys 'I AM INTERESTED.' When a correct and proper alignment takes place and your brain produces dimensional energy, that image will be picked up by one of our subscribers or researchers." Fair enough. Then how about letting your researchers pick up this image...

Every so often, we find a web site we'd like to share that might be in BAD TASTE or a SHOCK to our gentler readers. This page

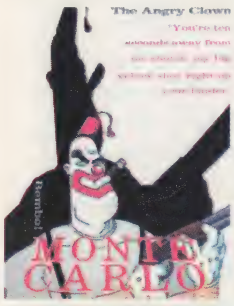
enter at your own risk

may "heave" and "hurl" you into a state of "retch"edness.

http://www.cec.wustl.edu/~jfg2/boot3.htm

Monte Carlo and the Juggernauts

Thrill to the animated adventures of Monte Carlo, a superhero who makes up for his lack of superpowers by running people over with his '82 Monte Carlo. Artist Steven J. Glowicki has created four hilarious downloadable adventures featuring the exploits of Carlo and the Juggernauts (Bembo, the Angry Clown; The Jack Lord Android and Snyder, the surveillance expert). And don't miss the collectible Monte Carlo trading cards.



http://www.umich.edu/~umsoais/isweb/people/dcm/index.html

Canine Creations

If you've always thought that your dog needed a hat, but you just didn't know where to find one, worry no longer, because Canine Creations is the place to get your boxer a beret or your pinscher a pillbox. If dogs could talk, they'd tell there owners not to buy them hats, but since we humans still hold dominion over domestic pets we have free reign to dress them as ridiculously as we want. Still after seeing the poor cocker spaniel decked out in the Christmas hat ("Very elegant. All red, with an off-white poinsettia on the brim") we couldn't help but want to report this site to PETA.

http://www.acmepet.com/doghats/

Sock Puppets Rule!

There isn't really much to say about this page except that it exists, which is strange enough. John McKee, a "Technical Therapist" at Taligent, is not only obsessed with skydiving, he's an enormous fan of sock puppets. So what does he do? He combines the two. Thrill to glorious photos of a guy plummeting from a plane while talking to his hand! Wow in amazement at the bodily structure of a sock puppet revealed through x-ray! And if this isn't enough stocking fun for a day, hyperlink over to the bizarre cult of sock puppetry being developed by Dilbert creator Scott Adams (http://www.unitedmedia.com /comics/ dilbert/puppets/). This is more pervasive than you think.

http://Blue-Skies.taligent.com:2000/Sock.html

Classic Weird on the Web

Mr. Edible Starchy Tuber Head
http://winnie.acsu.buffalo.edu/potatoe/

For those of you with limited vocabulary, Mr. Edible Starchy Tuber Head is a pseudonym for Mr. Potato Head (who the site presumedly is not named after in spirit of the litigious mood prevailing on the 'net nowadays). Long before his starring role in this winter's blockbuster *Toy Story*, and subsequent transformation from Boomer icon to play-thing-of-the-moment, the lovable spud had a place on the Web. Obviously the first part of the site to visit is the Virtual Potato Head. Here you can adorn a two-dimensional replica of Mr. ESTH with endless combinations of hair, eyes, ears, feet and nose just as you would his three-dimensional real-life cousin. Once you've tired of that (and you'll quickly remember why as a youngster your Mr. Potato Head always had a good layer of dust on it), try the PotatoeCam (sic) where you'll find shots of Mr. ESTH in different personas and at locales (at press time he was visiting Big Sur). Beyond *Toy Story*, it's a little known fact that Mr. ESTH has a storied film history. We certainly were surprised by his cameos in *Pulp Fiction*, *Goldeneye* and even *Rear Window*. Perhaps site's oddest feature is dedicated to translating Mr. ESTH's worst nightmare, in 40 languages. We won't give away just what that nightmare is, except for our readers well versed in ancient Greek it's: *"O Theos mou! Echo ten labrida en te mou kephale!"* Beyond Mr. ESTH, do not miss the link that leads to the endless amusement his distant relative Mr. Edible Fiberous Stalk Head (for the vegetable ignorant, that's the fictional Mr. Celery Head)

Mr. Edible Starchy Tuber Head

Nancy Drew: Girl Sleuth, Girl Wonder

Obviously a postdoctoratal thesis gone lunatic, here you can read a scholarly examination of the non-literature of the so-called "Eternal Prom Queen," Nancy Drew. The authors, postmodern feminists with a vengeance, scrutinize everything from the settings (a "vine-tangled, fern-matted bower" exemplifies "romantic ruin evok[ing] nostalgia for a past order") to the characteristics of the villains in the stories ("rootless crooks and carnival clowns who have strayed from maternal and institutional influence...who want to upset the elitist WASP order"). They even question the deep significance of Nancy's favorite colors and the underlying sexuality of Nancy's madcap dashes after danger. Ah to lust after the simple life: a little roadster and a boyfriend like Ned.

http://sunsite.unc.edu/cheryb/nancy.drew/ktitle.html

Random Word Haiku

The very purpose of this section is to look for sites as weird as this.

The name says it all. Go to the above address for silly poetry.

http://www.cs.indiana.edu/cgi-bin/haiku

International Airsickness Bag Collection

http://www.pvv.unit.no/~bct/spypose/

After visiting our "Enter @ Your Risk" site this month, this "hURL" should be your next logical stop along the bandwidth. The collection itself is rather small, consisting of at press time bags from ten airlines ranging from SAS to Delta. The true wonder of the site is the erudite analysis of the barf bag's design and function through history from the veiwpoint of a Scandanavian. And you just have to love the author's rationale for picking his subject matter: "Sadly neglected, airsickness bags and sickness bags in general don't get the attention they deserve, except in those short, intense moments they are very much needed and appreciated." O

kook du jour

George Dahl, who outlines his belief that the secret police somehow attempted to make him trigger a blackout in New York city at http://www.teleport. com/~dkossy/dahl.html

In this letter, Dahl writes that he believes the city of New York spent more than $1 million to renovate buildings next to his $115-a-month slum apartment so they could spy on him. These clandestine agents followed him all throughout New York, constantly surveiling him. This wasn't the only havoc they played with Dahl's life. He writes that he believes some 40,000 Americans have been vested into the antics of the secret police since they started operations in 1977. He believes that an attractive young man or teen is often used to try to "bait" him, though he never explains why they consider him a threat. When four of the five clerks closed their windows at a power company as he tried to pay his bill, Dahl took this as a scheme to cause what he phrased "an angry outburst that could be used as 'proof' that through paranormal powers I had somehow triggered the transformer malfunction and resulting blackout."

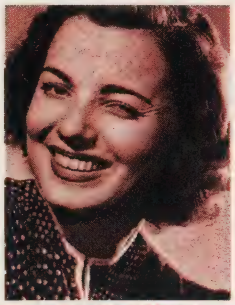
The secret police involved at least forty people, many of them Con Edison employees, in staging their scene in Con Edison's office," the letter at the site goes on.

"Although these people were intended to witness an angry outburst they were also witnesses to the fact that intelligence agents were expending a great deal of effort to manufacture an incident..."

File Edit View Go Bookmarks Options Directory Help

Netsite: \\Web_pages.we're_glad_we\can't.find! By Greg Gabrianski

What's New! | What's Cool! | Upgrades | Net Search | Net Directory | Newsgroups | Handbook



Your On-line Hostess, Ann-Marie

The Credit Card Number Circulator*

Hey dere, how ya doin'? Welcome to the Credit Card Number Circulator. So youse got yourself a credit card, eh? Pretty exciting, ain't it? Now wouldn't youse just love to post da credit card numba and prove to de whole world dat you made it big? Well dis is the right place, pal. Now, dis here spider site or Web site or whatever you people call it is made up by us honest-type people, see. We ain't about to do nuthin' funny wit your numba, see? We just wanna take a look at it. Admire it, if you will. So you post your numba, we'll admire it for about two or tree weeks and den we'll repost it here for the world to enjoy.

Another good ting is dat way, if your credit card ever gets lost or stold, all youse gotta do is visit dis here Web site and find your credit card numba. No callin' the goddamn credit card company and crying to them that youse lost your card. You wanna look like a dork? No, who does? And you know them sons of bitches are thinkin' it too. Thinkin' what a dumb idiot you are for losing your card. And fellahs out dere, the broads, they love this stuff. You tell a broad you got your credit card numba on the Credit Card Number Circulator, and dey go crazy on you in the sack.

So take your rat or your mouse or whatever da hell it's called and **click here to post your credit card numba** and remember to leave your name and da date da card expires.

Here's a few of this month's featured card numbers:

Andrew Silverstone: VISA #9678882110881856760002337 1

Shelley Keillor: American Express #026726800043976668675309

Click here to post your Social Security numba.

Some people'll tell ya that ya oughta keep your numba to yourself. I'll tell youse right now, dem people are damn lying bastards. You tell dese people dat if I ever find dem der dead meat. You gotta ax yourself: Why do dey call it a "social" security card? Eh? Dat means you oughta be social wit your numba. Post it here. People don't like a wiseguy who keeps everything to himself and don't share wit others.

Joseph A. Crutch
Lic. S456-0000-0202-00
1995 W. Some Lane
Acity, IL 44444
19
Pay to the order of
$
BALD EAGLE BANK
Acity, IL 44444
Memo
⑈650000000⑈ 0000 ⑆ 0000004 ⑈ 0500

Click here to post your bank account numba.

Why? Listen, we're tired of answerin' your damn questions. We find it very insulting dat you don't trust us by now. Just post it, OK? Don't forget da name of da bank and da city it's in.

Now, in return for all we're doin' for youse here, **we'd like to ask ya a few questions**. Sorta like a survey. We like to know as much as possible about youse people so we can keep makin' dis here Website a rewardin' experience and stuff like dat for youse people.

What is your address?

Da hours dat you're at work?

Any extended trips away from home you'll be takin' in da future?

Are you elderly or weak? yes **Can you defend yourself?** yes

Do you got a gun? yes **A dog?** yes

What's da code to your house's security system if you got one?

Any windows you usually leave unlocked?

Where do ya keep money or jewelry hidden in da house?

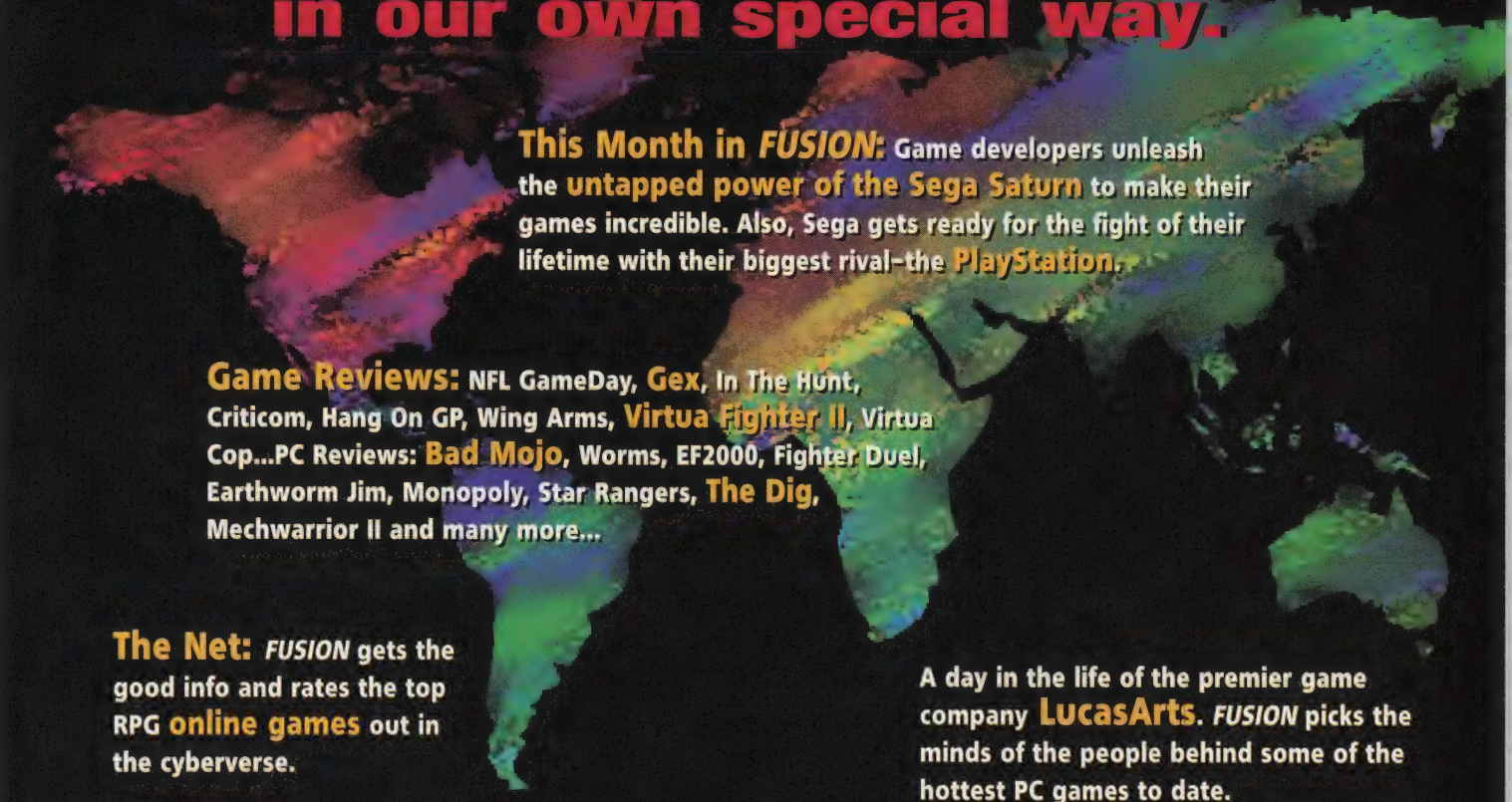
Are you an attractive broad? yes

Send message | Erase message

*Just in case you had the stupid idea that we were actually advocating the posting of credit card numbers and such, get a clue, will ya? This is intended as a parody. If you still feel this urgent need to share your credit card number with someone, call our circulation department or why not just buy someone you love a sweater?

Beyond the Bounds

of ordinary interactive entertainment magazines, *FUSION* delivers news, reviews and insights in our own special way.



This Month in *FUSION*: Game developers unleash the **untapped power of the Sega Saturn** to make their games incredible. Also, Sega gets ready for the fight of their lifetime with their biggest rival-the **PlayStation.**

Game Reviews: NFL GameDay, **Gex**, In The Hunt, Criticom, Hang On GP, Wing Arms, **Virtua Fighter II**, Virtua Cop...PC Reviews: **Bad Mojo**, Worms, EF2000, Fighter Duel, Earthworm Jim, Monopoly, Star Rangers, **The Dig**, Mechwarrior II and many more...

The Net: *FUSION* gets the good info and rates the top RPG **online games** out in the cyberverse.

A day in the life of the premier game company **LucasArts**. *FUSION* picks the minds of the people behind some of the hottest PC games to date.

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A look at the 'net through private eyes uncovers some chilling facts. Will the rise of technology mean the decline of privacy?

Watching the digital Detectives

story by Bob King • art by Richard Downs

The jewel thief altered his name, his city and even his gender. But he couldn't erase his online persona.

Unfortunately for the fugitive, Joseph Seanor was on his trail.

Seanor is one of those folks you don't want after you if you're trying to cover your tracks through cyberspace. He's someone you *do* want on your side if you've got a person you'd like to track down. And if he's learned one thing from his years of being a professional snoop, it's this: Most people have no idea how to hide.

Yeah, they try to cut all ties with their old self, but they always fall back on some routine. They always join the same health club. Or always eat lunch at McDonald's. Or hit Taco Bell for an exciting night on the town every Friday.

They do the same thing online, too. Even in the movie *The Net* in which Sandra Bullock attempts to hide from a mysterious hacker syndicate, yet the minute she got her hands on a computer keyboard she flew right back to the exact same online chat channel that she always would hang out in and went for help to CyberBob?. Of course, the hackers were watching, so within a matter of hours CyberBob suffered an unfortunate brain dump all over his parquet floor. Bullock managed to escape the hackers' clutches by fleeing through a merry-go-round on the Santa Monica Pier.

Well, folks, that convenient merry-go-round isn't always so handy in real life. At least it wasn't there for the guy Seanor tracked down.

The fellow was in his late 20s, the son of a well-heeled East Coast family—and a would-be transsexual desperate for a sex-change operation. One day, after he'd been living as a woman for a while, he simply vanished. A week later, his mother noticed some others things were missing: her diamond necklace, a ring and a tennis bracelet.

The mother assumed her son wanted to sell the jewels to help pay for his operation. She didn't want to call the cops; she just wanted to talk to him. But where was he? He left no forwarding address, just a stack of old e-mail from a bunch of electronic bulletin boards.

Enter Seanor. He's president of the CIBIR Corporation, a D.C.-area company that specializes in high-tech investigations and who is a fixture of the online private-eye scene. From his previous career doing "analysis" for "the government" (that's as specific as he'll get—draw your own conclusions), he knew how to scan the e-mail for clues. In virtual life as well as the real thing "humans are creatures of habit," Seanor says. "They'll use very crude and lewd names, or they'll always have a number in their name or their name will begin with 'A.' One person might be addicted to lowercase letters and goofy slang. Another might end every posting with the same Lou Barlow lyric."

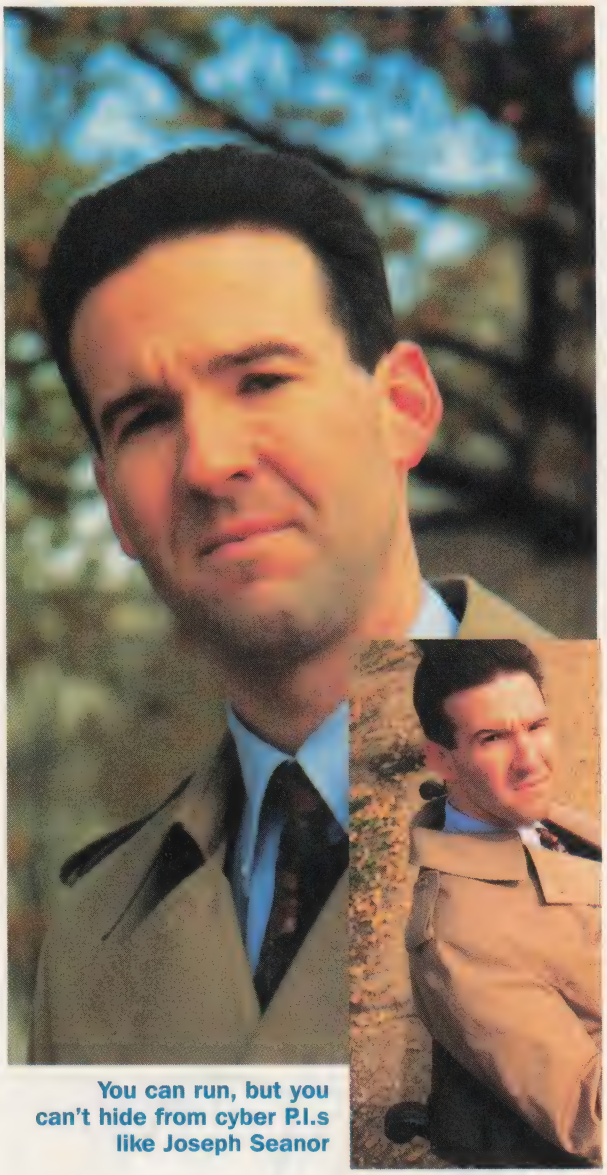
The person Seanor was tracking always ended his screen name with the same word: blue. So, he would always sign in as something along the lines of "Crystal Blue" on one BBS, or "Indigo Blue" on another. Seanor figured the guy was still online somewhere.

So Seanor searched Yahoo for a listing of alternative lifestyle BBSs around the country, then painstakingly subscribed to about 200 of them. He wrote a script to log on to each one and download a list of users. After four months, he found a name that fit the pattern on a bulletin board in San Francisco. Better yet, other e-mail clues fit, too.

Best of all, the person had left a phone number.

Seanor spun the number through a national phone directory on CD-ROM. That gave him an address. Then he ran the address through another commercial database, CDB/Infotek, just to make sure. After that, he had another investigator make a visit to the home.

"It was the guy," Seanor says triumphantly. Or by that point, girl. She'd had gone through the sex change and adopted a new identity on the other side of the country from her old home. Just one thing tripped her up. If she would have stayed off the bulletin boards, Seanor says, "it would have been 100 times harder."



Gail Shust

You can run, but you can't hide from cyber P.I.s like Joseph Seanor

GIGABYTE GUMSHOES

Not all private investigators are as 'net-savvy as Seanor, who spends up to 150 hours a month strapped into a pair of virtual reality goggles (he says they're easier on his eyes than staring at a monitor). But the Internet is rapidly becoming a crucial part of the PI's tool kit. If *The Rockford Files* were filmed today, the show might just start with viewers checking out Jim's e-mail instead of his answering machine. Though, he'd probably still get the crap beaten out of him each time he went home to his trailer.

Some investigators use the 'net as a place to hang out, gossip with other private eyes or try to market their services with pages on the Web. Others use it as a reference library to translate ZIP codes or track down Securities and Exchange Commission documents. A smaller number live and work in cyberspace, trailing hackers and sniffing out black markets of corporate data.

Of course, computers are nothing new to P.I.s. They've had online access for years to companies that sell vast stores of data on just about everyone: credit reports, addresses, unlisted phone numbers, Social Security numbers, marriage and divorce documents, names of neighbors, criminal histories, driving records, shopping habits, hobbies, medical data, property values, even minutiae like height and eye color. In many communities, data traditionally available only on paper, such as liens and county court dockets, are just a modem and a mouse click away. And that's just the stuff you can get legally.

"At least 95 percent of the investigations I do use an online source of some sort," says Richard Mauzy, an investigator who runs the Public Integrity Research Corp. in Gilbert, Ariz. "It's been basically a revolutionary change."

The 'net has nothing comparable to the commercial databases—yet. It's not yet secure enough right now for such sensitive (and, more importantly, expensive) information. Some P.I.s say it's just a matter of time, though, until the security can be assured enough that data companies like CDB/Infotek and TRW can

HANG WITH THE PRIVATE EYES

- ***LaMont Bankson's private investigation home page***
  http://www.pihome.com/
- ***Private eye mailing list***
  Send a "subscribe private-eye'" message to listserv@netcom.com
- ***The Private Investigators Mall***
  http://www.pimall.com/
- ***PI Magazine***
  http://www.pimall.com/pimag/pimag1.html

BE A SNOOP YOURSELF!

- ***Searching for people: tips on hunting for e-mail addresses***
  gopher://liberty.uc.wlu.edu/11/internet/personsearches
- ***DejaNews Research Service***
  http://www.dejanews.com/

You can search months' worth of newsgroup postings (not the alt. groups, however) for topics AND people. One nifty feature lets you find out everything a particular person has posted for the past several months.

- ***MIT Usenet Address Server***

This server lets you search for names of people who have posted to Usenet. E-mail the message HELP to mail-server@rtfm.mit.edu for instructions.

- ***E-mail Search Program***
  http://www.mailbox.co.uk/esp/

Supposedly lets you scan the Internet for people's e-mail addresses using their names. Mine didn't come up, but it might work for you.

- ***Knowbot Information Service***
  telnet://info.cnri.reston.va.us:185/

Good for finding e-mail addresses of people on certain services, like MCI Mail.

- ***SavvySearch***
  http://guaraldi.cs.colostate.edu:2000/form

Conduct up to four different kinds of searches simultaneously (like, say, Lycos *and* InfoSeek) out of a total of 19. When you NEED to find it.

- ***Public Integrity Research Corp.***

http://www.pihome.com/pirc/pirc1.html
Offers links to lots of information and search engines.

COMPUSERVE

If you want databases, this member of the Big 3 has 'em. Services include IQuest (GO IQU-1), which allows you to pull TRW and Dun & Bradstreet credit reports on companies. PhoneFile (GO PHONEFILE) has phone listings from around the country. Computrace (GO TRACE) is a crude version of CDB/Infotek's database and gives you the last known city and ZIP code for people with a certain name; it works best with unusual names. (For instance, the U.S. apparently has only one Newt Gingrich—thank God.)

You can even run Florida driver's licenses and car registrations here, after getting an account with the state (GO FCA-1). But be warned: there's a reason subscribers refer to the service as Compu$erve.

PRIVACY INFO

- ***Pretty Good Privacy***
  http://web.mit.edu/network/pgp-form.html

The premier public-key encryption program for the masses—and, for the moment at least, still legal in the U.S. This is the "official" home of the non-commercial version, though it's available in plenty of other places. (For more information on PGP, check out our story on page 50 of this issue.)

- ***Electronic Privacy Information Center***
  http://www.epic.org/

Offers a wealth of privacy-related info, including EPIC's periodic alerts.

- ***Also check out***

http://www.epic.org/privacy/privacy_resources_faq.html#Privacy_tools for EPIC's guide to privacy resources.

- ***Protect your Social Security Number.***
  ftp://cpsr.org/cpsr/privacy/ssn/html/SSN-FAQ.html

Offered by Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility.

- ***The Cypherpunks Home Page***
  ftp://ftp.csua.berkeley.edu/pub/cypherpunks/Home.html

Those wacky Cypherpunk funsters always have something up their sleeve when it comes to encryption, privacy and other Big Brother-annoying topics. A good site for lots of various info.

- ***Webster Network Strategies***
  http://www.webster.com/

Scary self-promotion for WebTrack, a program that can tell your boss or school what Web pages you're browsing and when. While you're there, be sure to tell Mr. Orwell we said "hello."

- ***Employee Monitoring: Is There Privacy in the Workplace?***
  gopher://pwa.acusd.edu/00/USDinfo/privacy/fsenglish/fs7.txt

The short answer is "no." - *Bob King*

offer their wares on the world's largest network.

"I don't think the era has come into its own," says LaMont Bankson, an Arizona private eye who oversees a home page for investigators. The P.I.s he knows mostly use the Internet for making contacts with others around the country. "You have a budget of X amount of dollars and you need something in Arizona and you can't fly out here. So you find a PI who can go down to the courthouse and check a record."

But the new era is fast approaching, says Dan Draz, a San Diego investigator who battled insurance and calling card fraud for Equifax and MCI before striking out on his own five years ago. He says he and Seanor represent a new breed: computer-literate thirty-somethings who have made investigating their chosen career, not just a way to earn some dough after retiring from the police force. P.I.s of the future, Seanor predicts, will fall in two categories—some will learn the 'net and the rest will trail behind. "There's a lot of guys out there who don't have computers in their office. I don't know how they'll compete."

The prospect of gigabyte gumshoes beefing up their online arsenals thrills people like Draz, but leaves others nervous.

After all, the most famous computer-assisted investigation to date is the one that helped an Arizona man, Robert John Bardo, track down sitcom actress Rebecca Schaeffer in July 1989. Bardo, an obsessed fan of the *My Sister Sam* co-star, hired a PI to find Schaeffer's address. Then he skulked outside her West Hollywood apartment and killed her with a gunshot to her chest.

The murder shocked Californians, many of whom had no idea that their personal data was available to any loon who cared to look for it and prompted the state to clamp down on the release of information from motorists' records. Investigators can still get addresses, but only for the

purpose of serving subpoenas, and they're subject to audits to assure they follow the rules. The Schaeffer killing also helped inspire a 1994 federal law that will force states to adopt restrictions next year on the type of data they release about motorists.

Privacy advocates believe that such efforts may be a good start but don't go far enough. "These problems are going to get worse and it's not going to just be names and addresses," says Marc Rotenberg, director of the Electronic Privacy Information Center. "It's going to be psychiatric records, high school grades. Whatever people want to know about you, they can find out."

But don't blame us, the P.I.s say. They say that if the fallout in California from the Schaeffer killing is any guide, the public will be hurt more than helped if information ever goes completely private.

"I guarantee you that there are poor mothers that aren't getting their child support money because they can't find their deadbeat husbands," Mauzy says. He blamed the privacy craze largely on scary "look how much we can find out about YOU" stories concocted by journalists.

And, as he points out, many public records are a key part of the web of human relationships that keeps society functioning. If you own a house, your name and address, the property's value and the price you paid are a public record; that helps guard against fraud and ensure tax fairness. Companies like TRW and Equifax give consumers instant access to credit while giving businesses some assurance they won't get ripped off. If you're a roving con man, why shouldn't someone be able to find out?

In fact, Mauzy calls for opening even more records, such as criminal histories, now available only in certain states, such as Florida. People want to check out this nanny they're hiring and see if she's ever done anything naughty.

"There's a point we're approaching, and I think we've passed it, where the government is helping people hide," Mauzy says.

The same goes for Anthony Zinkus, who owns the Tucson agency that Bardo hired to track down Rebecca Schaeffer (although news accounts said a California investigator actually pulled her address). He's still using databases for routine missing-person and long-lost-love cases, like the one that netted Schaeffer. "It's rare that it's not for a legitimate or lawful purpose," Zinkus says.

He even questions proposals to close medical records. "You meet a nice chick tonight. Wouldn't you want to know if she has AIDS?"

Rotenberg disagrees: "Not everyone's a criminal. We should not treat them as if they were." Anyone who believes that most people don't care should compare a prison with a wealthy neighborhood: The inmates have no privacy at all, while the affluent use gates and walls to separate themselves from the riff-raff. "People who can afford it get as much privacy as they can."

VIRTUAL VOYEURISM

In a sense, P.I.s lie at the fault line of a very modern debate. The right to privacy—a concept not found in the U.S. Constitution—only entered the American legal lexicon a century ago. Well, 106 years, to be exact, dating back to when future Supreme Court justice Louis Brandeis co-wrote his landmark *Harvard Law Review* article on the topic. That was during the dawn of yellow journalism, when new mass-market newspapers were titillating the populace with scandalous news culled from the courts and cop beat. The headlines caused many people to suddenly fear how much of their private lives was open to public scrutiny.

Modern society, more crowded, mobile and anonymous than the rural communities of old, creates the market for snoops. "Years ago, if you lived in Tombstone, there was somebody who knew everything about everybody anyway," Mauzy says. Today, "we have situations where somebody swoops into town from Maine and

WANT TO HIDE?

YOU CAN, EVEN IN THIS AGE OF ALL-SEEING DATABASES. BUT BE PREPARED TO PAY THE PRICE.

That means: Pay cash for everything. Live from a P.O. box address. Rent a home instead of owning. Buy a car in a friend's name. Abandon hopes for a well-paying career and instead take the kinds of low-paying jobs that tend to go to the rootless. And always keep a suitcase handy.

In short, give up any semblance of what most consider the American dream.

"It's a hell of a way to have to live," says one woman who knows. The woman (let's call her Susan) spent two years "underground," hiding from an abusive ex-husband—a former cop who had access to just about any database available.

Despite her precautions, he managed to track her down sometimes. Once it was by pulling their son's medical records. Another time he found out in what school the kids were enrolled. He'd leave cute calling cards behind, like slashing all the tires on her car.

Even a P.O. box is no sure safeguard, she learned—some slip of paper at the post office lists your true address. If you have a job, it's easy for someone to stake out your workplace and follow you home. Getting credit in your name is like carrying a neon "STALK ME" sign. "There are so many different things that can lead to somebody," she says.

Without even wanting to, through trial and error Susan learned to be invisible.

"You have to give up your lifestyle," says Susan, who forfeited a career at a major corporation. "You can't have assets and be incognito. You can't be licensed in any way; you can't be any type of professional person. It requires a lot of time changing jobs, plus an employer doesn't want somebody on board who brings those types of problems. Can you afford to pay cash for everything?

"You have to have friends. You have to have people who will harbor you. And then you put them in danger."

Susan did her hiding legally, unlike the scam artists who create new identities by stealing dead people's Social Security numbers. Arizona private investigator Richard Mauzy handled a similar case 10 years ago, and says it's possible—within the law—to cover your electronic tracks.

In that case, a woman was hiding her child from his father, a molester. "He'd hunted her through three states," Mauzy says. So Mauzy flew with the woman to another state and had her fill out a flurry of documents to make it look like she was living there: credit applications, change-of-address forms, even a driver's license. She signed up for phone service and made a private mailbox business her legal address.

Some people are more creative. Mauzy spent a lot of time tracing the assets of a prominent businessman who had adopted the name of a big city, like Denver, as his full legal name. When Mauzy tried to run the name through databases, he'd just get a bunch of references to Denver, Colo. "That caused enormous trouble," he says. The same guy leased his house instead of buying it, so Mauzy couldn't put a lien on it.

"If you want to hide in this society, you can," he says. "You can use the system to hide."

Anthony Zinkus, a PI in Tucson, Ariz., is even more blunt: "If you find someone through a database, believe me, they weren't missing." In 37 recent cases, the only person he found through a database search was dead.

As for Susan, she stopped hiding after her ex-husband was killed. And she's got a new career—with a database company that lets cops, investigators and journalists track down people's addresses, phone numbers, Social Security numbers, property data, vehicles, neighbors, marital histories and criminal records.

She sees no contradiction in her path from being one of the hunted to an employee of the hunters. At least she knows firsthand how the system works.

"I could tell you stories about how our system has tracked down child molesters and people who have been kidnapped," she says. "We're taking bad guys off the street." - *Bob King*

wants to invest in this or that. You have people that are popping up from foreign countries all the time now."

It's no coincidence that the same age has seen the rise of the private eye as an enduring figure in movies, TV shows and books. People like their privacy, but they're also voracious voyeurs. They scarf up the *National Enquirer* and *People* and *A Current Affair* and *Melrose Place* and dial up "listen in on private conversation" 900 lines to gain the illusion of peeping through the mini-blinds.

So why should it be any different online? The hackers, after all, say information wants to be free.

Hackers have a lot in common with P.I.s. While most investigators have much to learn about cruising the 'net, most P.I.s are well versed in the art of "social engineering," the term used by hackers and phreaks for coaxing information out of unwitting humans. P.I.s call it using a "pretext." For instance, claiming to be a creditor so a clerk will tell you somebody's bank balance is not uncommon.

"In a way, the locked door creates the possibility of the eye at the keyhole. If we never wore clothes, nobody would go to strip bars."

Such person-to-person dealings still make up the bulk of most private eyes' jobs. But as more people carry out their work, play and romances online, investigators are bound to follow them there. It's a lot easier than most people realize, says Seanor, who often capitalizes on other peoples' ignorance of the electronic trail they inadvertently leave behind when they shut off their computers.

Sometimes, it's manifested by corporate employees blabbing away on a newsgroup about some sensitive company project, apparently oblivious to the notion that the world is watching. "It's kind of weird," Seanor says, though occasionally not so weird. Sometimes the loose lips open up to some innocent-seeming query, like "Anybody know about plans for the latest minivan from Ford?" The folks who answer never notice or even know that the one posing the questions works for GM.

They also never notice that a simple search engine or archive, DejaNews, for example, can tell a nosy PI about most Usenet postings they've made in the past few months. (Seanor uses a similar search engine that he wrote himself.)

Many users also assume that their e-mail is gone once they delete it. Bad mistake, as Ollie North learned during the Iran-Contra hearings. In fact, many Internet providers keep all their users' mail backed up on tape for as long as six months. All it takes is a court order or a willing system administrator to open it up. Seanor's gone both routes in his hunt for illicitly traded data.

The same kind of help opens up a wealth of other info on a person's habits: When has the person been logged on? Do those times coincide with the times that someone was exporting stolen corporate secrets? Web sites' logs and new software being marketed to employers and schools can tell you what pages someone has been browsing. On UNIX systems, users' .new srcfiles will tell you if they've been avid readers of alt.binaries.pictures.erotica.bestiality or alt.fan.barrymanilow. (See a related story on UNIX log files on page 42.)

If such things can be done legally, you can bet someone's doing them illegally too. It's not hard to guess that system administrators somewhere are getting off reading e-mail or taking bribes to pry sensitive data from people's accounts.

After all, in real life, privacy laws haven't stopped the emergence of a shadowy data underground, hawked by companies selling information stolen by corrupt cops or government workers. One 1991 federal probe netted Social Security employees, a Chicago cop and a Georgia sheriff's clerk who, prosecutors said, sold confidential data to underground information brokers. The loot included people's salaries and work histories and data from the Federal Bureau of Investigation National Crime Information Center.

Even in California, in the grip of the state's supposed Iron Curtain-like information blackout, it only took Mauzy one day and $300 to get somebody's criminal history. He later found out that the local PI he hired used half the money to bribe a cop to get the data so quickly. "I was rather shocked to discover that I was part of it," says Mauzy, a former investigator for the Arizona attorney general's office. "I did not leave law enforcement to become a crook."

Is the same thing happening on the 'net? You bet. For much the same reason that we will always have private eyes. As long as someone's trying to hide something, someone else will try to pry it loose.

In a way, the locked door creates the possibility of the eye at the keyhole. If we never wore clothes, nobody would go to strip bars. Zinkus offers some consolation, of sorts: You might be too insignificant to be worth spying on.

"It's people thinking that 'Hey, my little life is so important that everyone is trying to find out about me,'" he says. "When you get old you'll realize how few people really care."

BOB KING IS AN INVESTIGATIVE REPORTER AT THE *SARASOTA (FLA.) HERALD-TRIBUNE*. WE WERE GOING TO PRINT HIS SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER, BUT HE DIDN'T THINK THAT WAS SUCH A GOOD IDEA.

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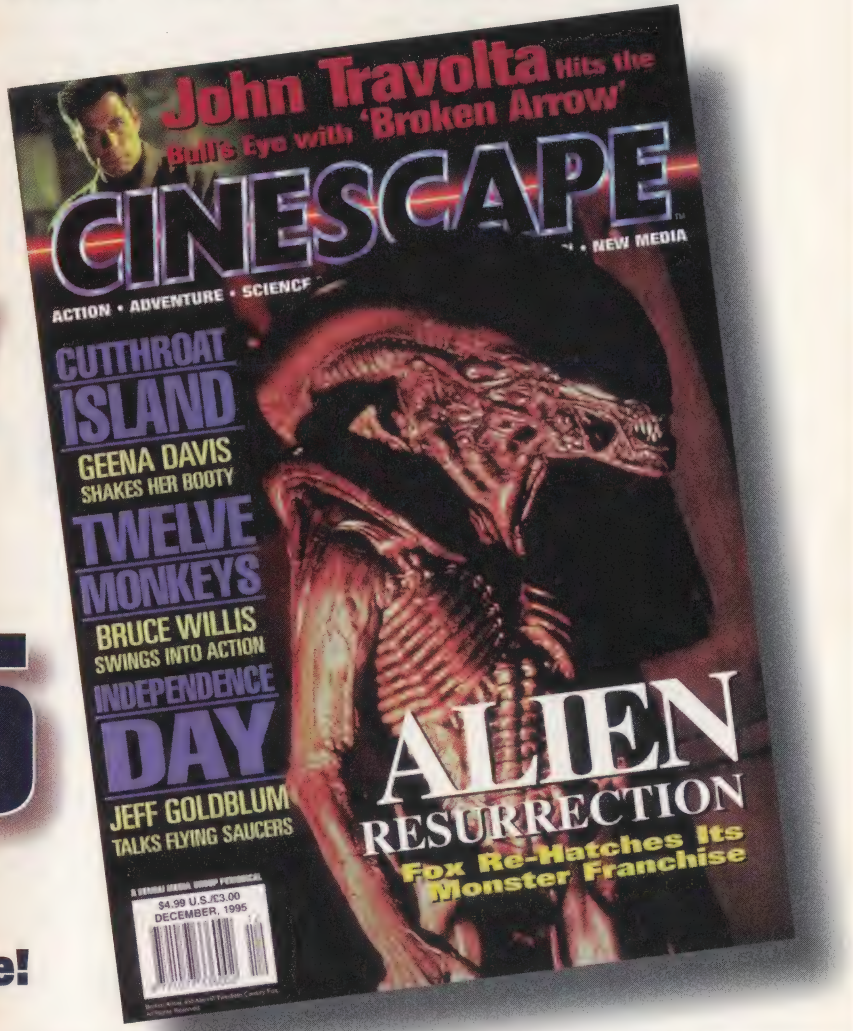

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DHCI026

the (w)Hole Truth on Love?

An L.A. investigator's site claims Kurt Cobain's death may not have been suicide

It's not a good career move to turn on your client," admits Beverly Hills private eye Tom Grant.

But that hasn't stopped him from posting on the Web his suspicions that alternative rock star Courtney Love was somehow involved in the death of her husband, Nirvana singer Kurt Cobain. Grant, whose allegations are outlined at **http://miavx1.acs.muohio.edu/~carmance/kurt/index.htmlx**, was hired by Love to find the then-missing grunge icon in early April 1994. A few days later, an electrician found the body of Cobain's at his Seattle home. Police concluded that Cobain, who once wrote a song called "I Hate Myself and Want to Die," had barricaded himself in a second-story greenhouse room and killed himself with a shotgun blast to the head. Love's tearful, profane reading of her husband's suicide note, in a tape played to fans at Cobain's memorial vigil, was aired on MTV and became an unforgettable moment of rock-'n'-roll tragedy, '90s-style.

But Grant says it was no suicide. His theory: Love may have had Cobain killed because he planned to divorce her and quit the music business. Grant says the world should know.

"There are kids all over the world who have been killing themselves over this,'" Grant says. "The very day I decided to go public with this, a guy up in Tracy, Calif., put a shotgun in his mouth and called out to his friends, 'Hey, just like Kurt Cobain,' and pulled the trigger.

"We've got to stop that. I'm completely convinced that these kids killed themselves over something that didn't actually happen."

Not surprisingly, Grant's allegations have met with a less than cordial response from Love (known to toss off some mean 'net invectives herself). An ad she took out in *Publishers Weekly* threatened to "sue the skin off" anyone who repeats Grant's accusations. But she apparently hasn't carried out that threat with the *Los Angeles Times*, which mentioned the allegations in an August 1995 profile of Love, or various radio talk-show hosts who have discussed Grant's investigation. She also hasn't sued Grant himself, although he claims someone has tried to sabotage his case by impersonating him on America Online.

Among the evidence he cites, Grant says:

- Love gave Grant various locations to check when he was looking for Cobain, but never told him to go to the house where he was eventually found dead. Why not?
- Somebody kept trying to use Cobain's Seafirst Mastercard for days after he died but before his body was discovered. Who?
- Police said the room where Cobain died had been locked from inside, with a stool wedged against the door, so he must have been alone. Grant says the door could have been locked by someone on their way out, andthat the stool was actually sitting on the other side of the room.

Police reported that the 20-gauge shotgun, which Cobain had bought a week earlier for protection from prowlers, was loaded with three rounds. Why would he need three if he intended to kill himself?

Grant also claims that the "suicide note" was really a letter to Cobain's fans, explaining why he was quitting. He offers this excerpt: "The worst crime I can think of would be to rip people off by faking it and pretending as if I'm having 100 percent fun. Sometimes I feel as if I should have a punch-in time-clock before I walk out on stage." (OK, but what did he mean by "it's better to burn out than to fade away?")

Grant also says he's "80 percent'" sure that the June 1994 drug-overdose death of Kristen Pfaff, the bassist in Love's band, Hole, may have been a murder too.

The stool, the greenhouse, the note, the gun, the credit card all sound like they could be '90s equivalents to the grassy knoll, the umbrella man and the magic bullet in Dallas in '63. But Grant insists his investigation won't just become another of those loopy 'net conspiracy theories, like the folks who claim that Carl Sagan is covering up the real origin of crop circles. He predicts the murder will be solved someday, and the killer or killers will be prosecuted.

Grant says his Web presence, and his 1,000-member 'net mailing list, have generated tips that have strengthened his case. But the investigation isn't his idea of fun. "I've never been into conspiracies," he says. "I've never even seen the movie *JFK*."

by Bob King
photograph by John Livzey

PI Tom Grant says he airs his suspicions on the Web in an attempt to keep teens from committing suicide in tribute to Cobain.

we know what you're sending

The Web Masters are watching

we know where

Do you trust the people running the Internet? You better. Because every time you send e-mail or surf the Web, you're leaving behind your own little set of electronic fingerprints. These electronic smudges could be used against you in a court of law. They could be given to your employer, to show what you do during the day when you're being paid to work. They could be used by a jilted lover to spy on your activities. Worse things have happened. Most likely, the info will lay low, never raising its head. It might even be deleted...Then again, it might not.

Where is this anti-privacy mother lode? It's hiding in the log files of the computers that are running the Internet.

What's in a name?

If you follow the privacy debates on the Internet, then you know that it's relatively easy for somebody to read your e-mail messages. The answer is simple: Encrypt your files with a program like PGP before you send them. Unfortunately, while PGP does a great job sealing your e-mail inside an unbreakable electronic envelope, it doesn't do much to protect the address that's written on the envelope's front.

That's because computers on the Internet need to know where your message is going in order to deliver it properly. Even if you send a message via an anonymous remailer, at some point, the address must be decrypted for it to be delivered to your internet service provider's computer and dropped into your electronic mailbox.

There's the rub. In addition to delivering your message into its mailbox, the destination computer also records that the message was delivered. Many internet computers store that fact in a file known as a syslog. (Take a look at Figure 1 for a few lines from the syslog at vineyard.net.) The syslog doesn't make for good bedtime reading...unless you're a detective.

by Simson L. Garfinkel

we know what you receive
you're going
we know where you've been

Look closely at the first few lines of Figure 1, and you'll see that I was hard at work on Friday, December 1, sending e-mail to my friend (bbennett@vineyard.net), my editor (iu@mcs.com), and to some guy named Rick Ramsey at Sun Microsystems. (My messages are all sent out within a few seconds of each other because I set Eudora to ship outgoing mail every 10 minutes.) A few moments later, there's a return message from Mailer Daemon at Sun, indicating that Rick doesn't work there anymore. I also got mail from 73534.1367@ compuserve.com, whoever that is.

That's a lot of information for just a few lines of text. It doesn't tell you what I've said, but it lets you know with whom I am communicating. Map out the frequency of messages, their size, or correlate it with the time of day (all parts of a science called traffic analysis), and you can distinguish my personal contacts from my business connections, figure out who is close to me and come up with a list of my known associates.

During World War II, Hitler's SS used these techniques to analyze telephone records, which made it easier for the Germans to round up members of the underground. To prevent that from ever happening again, most European telephone systems do not record the numbers called by telephone subscribers. One side effect: There's no way to get an itemized bill. Such is the price of privacy.

What's scary about the Internet today is that we are repeating the mistakes of pre-war Europe. Our systems are creating large repositories of personal transaction information. In many cases, these so-called "log files" are archived, saved on tape and never really deleted.

Figure 1: A few lines from Vineyard.NET's syslog file

```
Dec  1 08:53:51 vineyard sendmail[22003]: AA22003:
from=<simsong@vineyard.net>, size=757, class=0, received
from mac-slg.vineyard.net
Dec  1 08:53:51 vineyard sendmail[22001]: AA22001: mes-
sage-id=<v02130501ace421bc65f1@[204.17.195.43]>
Dec  1 08:53:51 vineyard sendmail[22001]: AA22001:
from=<simsong@vineyard.net>, size=828, class=0, received
from mac-slg.vineyard.net
Dec  1 08:53:52 vineyard sendmail[22008]: AA22003:
to=<bbennett@vineyard.net>, delay=00:00:03, stat=Sent
Dec  1 08:53:54 vineyard sendmail[22013]: AA22001:
to=<iu@popmail.mcs.com>, delay=00:00:05, stat=Sent
Dec  1 08:53:54 vineyard sendmail[22006]: AA22002:
to=<Rick.Ramsey@Central.Sun.COM>, delay=00:00:05,
stat=Sent
Dec  1 08:53:55 vineyard sendmail[22011]: AA22004:
to=<rich@mktg.com>, delay=00:00:06, stat=Sent
Dec  1 08:54:18 vineyard sendmail[22016]: AA22016:
from=<Mailer-Daemon@Central.Sun.COM>, size=2147, class=0,
received from sun.com
Dec  1 08:54:19 vineyard sendmail[22018]: AA22016:
to=<simsong@vineyard.net>, delay=00:00:01, stat=Sent
Dec  1 09:44:50 vineyard sendmail[22482]: AA22482:
from=<73534.1367@compuserve.com>, size=685, class=0,
received from compuserve.com
Dec  1 09:44:51 vineyard sendmail[22487]: AA22482:
to=<simsong@vineyard.net>, delay=00:00:02, stat=Sent
```

The Web Watches What You Watch

Programs on the Internet called "Web servers" provide the information to Web browsers such as Netscape's Navigator. One of the most popular Web servers is the NCSA server. This nifty program, affectionately called httpd, has three very important log files:

* **access_log** - a file that logs every access to the server, including the name of the site making the access, the name of the file that was requested, the time of the access, and other interesting data
* **error_log** - all of the files that were requested that don't exist.
* **refer_log** - all of the links that point to the links on the current server.
* **agent_log** - a list of all of the programs that have contacted the server.

These log files are derived from the information provided by HTTP, the Hyper-Text Transfer Protocol. It's surprising the amount of anti-privacy information that's in HTTP. For example, HTTP has provision to send the e-mail address of the person making each request. Today, most Web browsers don't do this, but that's likely to change. That's because many of the companies giving away browsers hope to make their real money by selling servers. What company wouldn't want the e-mail addresses of those accessing their site?

Figure 2: A few lines from Vineyard.NET's refer_log file. Notice that the URL from a service such as Infoseek shows you what the user was actually searching for.

```
http://vineyard.net/ -> /cgi-bin/counter
http://www.intersex.com/main/ezines.html -> /awa/
http://www2.infoseek.com/NS/Titles?qt=%5Bwires+
journalist%5D -> /media.html
http://virtuma11.com/cgi-bin/searcher?
cat=%2Fnewsstand%2FAsWeAre%2F&
keyword= -> /awa
```

Ever had a web site greet you by name? You will...

Even without e-mail addresses, it's easy to determine where a particular HTTP request originates. TCP/IP protocols have a form of caller-ID built in: Whenever a Web server receives a connection from a computer on the network, it automatically knows the Internet address. When I worked at MIT Media Lab, my computer's name was daily-bugle.media.mit. edu. I was the only person who used daily-bugle regularly, so if you saw that computer's name in a log file, it was likely I was the one using it. These days, many people at large companies and universities have their own IP addresses, so it's even easier.

The refer_log is another source of privacy violations. It works like this: Whenever you access a Web server for a new page, one of the pieces of information that is sent along is the URL of the page that you are currently looking at. (The HTTP specification says that sending this information should be an option left up to the user, but I have never seen a browser where sending the refer info is optional.)

One of the main uses that companies have found for the refer_log is to gauge the effectiveness of advertisements that they pay for on other web sites. Another use is charting how customers move through a site. But it also reveals the URL of the page that a user hyperlinked from.

Researchers at the World Wide Web consortium have found another use of the refer_log: determining reader's predilections. Web search engines such as Lycos encode the user's search query inside the URL, then stores it in the refer_log. What's funny, I'm told, is that an astonishing number of people searching for pages about sex have been downloading the web specs for "MIME body parts." What's disturbing is that the refer_log can be correlated with the access_log to determine the names of the people searching for the good porn...or anything else. NCSA's latest web server software stores the refer info directly in the access_log, making it all the easier to violate people's privacy.

All of the trends on the Internet are to decrease user privacy, rather than increase it. Take Netscape's new "cookie" technology (http://www.netscape.com/newsref/std/cookie_spec.html for more info). Cookies allow a server to download a cookie with a secret code into your Web browser, effectively giving Webmasters an easy way to mark their readers with an indelible marker. Each time you revisit the site, the server will know that it's you.

Ever have a Web site greet you by name? As the commercials say, "You will."

Simson Garfinkel runs the service provider vineyard.net from his home on Martha's Vineyard.

BEGIN
"Anonymous" is a dirty word.

THE 'NET IS FACELESS. REMAILERS MAKE IT NAMELESS, TOO.

[Address Unknown]

by Sarah Ellerman

Met with suspicion and hostility, anonymity is a principle often challenged with the flawed logic that the desire to remain nameless implies that one "has something to hide." Many people assume that only a criminal would take measures to veil their identity. But there are many facets of regular life in which anonymity is honored and protected, such as democratic elections and crime-stopping hotlines. I've known plenty of people, both in real life and through anonymous channels, who hide behind an inscrutable alias at certain times. A friend who needed to talk on alt.sexual.abuse.recovery about the incest that she suffered. A married couple who think that decriminalizing drugs would solve a lot of our societal ills, but don't want to risk a midnight visit from the Feds. A lawyer who writes erotic stories about bi-sexuality, but doesn't want it to haunt him at the office. Even the Samaritans run a suicide prevention Web site that encourages visitors to correspond with them through anonymous channels.

ART BY MARK MONDAY

ANONYMOUS CONT'D

The 'net is a place for the free exchange of ideas. Hysterical would-be censors confuse the discussion of an illegal activity with the activity itself. It's perfectly legal to talk about narcotics, bombs and child pornography, but owning them can get you arrested. Anonymity protects this kind of borderline speech, and also legitimately protects trade secrets, battered spouses, whistleblowing, the posting of erotica and those who wish to challenge an established law. Anytime that you wish to express ideas that are contrary to your usual "real-life" persona, anonymity may be called for. The Internet makes tracking identity easier than ever. Our words can be effortlessly reproduced and multiplied long after we assume they've been deleted. In such a concrete medium, it is exponentially more important to create techniques to preserve identity simple, acceptable and freely available.

Anonymous remailers are set up with the sole purpose of stripping off all identifying material from a message, then resending it free of ID. Typically, this service is provided as charity to the Internet community. The users are not expected to pay, as doing so might compromise their anonymity. Many sysops volunteer their time and resources to maintaining remailers. The most famous anonymous machine, anon.penet.fi, is provided by Julf Helsingius, a Finnish philanthropist and computer scientist who often explains that living so close to the Soviet Union inspired a healthy respect for anonymity and freedom of speech.

To remail through the anon.penet.fi remailer, you first send a message to the autoresponder at help@anon.penet.fi. Read the help file that is e-mailed to you, and learn guidelines and rules for use. Then send an e-mail to ping@anon.penet.fi. This will e-mail you back an anonymous address of the form anXXX@anon.penet.fi, where the Xs are digits. You then set up a password for your anonymous account. You do so by sending an e-mail in this fashion:

```
To: password@anon.penet.fi
Subject: <whatever you wish>
```

In the message body, write only your intended password, which can be any string of digits and/or characters. Once you have done this, you are ready to use the account in this fashion:

```
To: anon@anon.penet.fi
Subject: <whatever you wish>
```

In the body, begin with the lines:

```
X-Anon-Password: <your password>
X-Anon-To: <whomever you wish, in the form
recipient@destination.com OR
this.is.a.newsgroup.name@anon.penet.fi>
```

Skip a line, then begin your message.. The server will completely anonymize your message, and will either e-mail it or post it to Usenet, as you instruct..

There are two different types of remailers. Often, they get lumped together under the moniker "anonymous," but in reality they run a spectrum from pseudo- to almost total anonymity. A pseudo-anonymous remailer keeps a record of your true e-mail address, but never divulges it. This is secure enough for most people, but a truly anonymous remailer refuses to keep any such record.

The anon.penet.fi remailer, also known as the "Finnish remailer," is a pseudo-anonymous set-up. Easy to use, it offers the added benefit of having a permanent address, so you can take part in lengthy exchanges yet always be certain that "an812" is the same person. This is called a "double-blind," in which each party does not know the other's true e-mail address. However, it's not for the truly paranoid; the operators of the Finnish remailer are very much aware of your address. In certain circumstances, such as a subpoena or a leak, it's conceivable this could lead to some problems. In one recent scuffle with the Church of Scientology, the operators of the Finnish remailer were forced to divulge a person's identity. If your anonymous life online could get you into trouble with law offline, it might be best to use a different approach to remailing.

Cypherpunk remailers

Another grouping of anonymous servers are known as the "soda remailers" or the "Cypherpunks remailers." They have slightly different features, but essentially run under the same software. These servers automatically conceal your identity by taking off the first header that they come to and following the ensuing directions on where to send the message. If you "chain" the message (that is, send it through a series of at least two remailers), then the final server has no trace of the original sender. The return address is merely a different secure remailer. Likewise, the original remailer never learned the final recipient;

it simply sent the message onto another remailer. Anonymity is preserved. Cypherpunks remailers also actively encourage the use of encryption software, as they believe that the contents of a message are just as private as its path. Remailing only obscures the route of a message, and encryption makes sure that anyone snooping cannot read the contents. Together, they form a strong line of security.

Not completely safe

It is important to understand that even the strongest remailers are subject to attack. Remailers are popular targets of crackers, thanks to the inherent challenge and the notion that an anonymized message is much juicier than standard fare. Messages can be tracked through a network through careful observation of timing and size. Certain remailers, but not all, offer a "latency" feature, intended to confuse anyone tracking traffic from a remailer. To understand why, think of it this way: if a remailer without latency always passes on a message exactly 2.5 minutes after receiving it, it could be tracked with confidence across a network. With latency, messages are fired off into the ether at random intervals.

Another security feature to shop around for on remailers is "reordering." This method dictates always keeping a pool of messages in the remailer and sending them out in mixed-up order. This method, too, can be foiled; an attacker can plot to fill the pool with their own messages, except for one—yours. When yours exits the pool, the attacker can easily recognize it.

The final vulnerability of remailers is the diminishing size of a message as it traverses the network. As each machine strips off the header and resends the message, the message shrinks a small, but noticeable and known, amount. This provides something for an attacker to track. The only remailers which conceal this detail are the Mixmaster remailers, which send messages in packets of uniform size. However, Mixmaster remailers only run under special software on UNIX platforms, so they are not widely used. You can check the Remailer List (http://www.cs.berkeley.edu/~raph/remailer-list.html) to research which remailers provide the features that are important to you.

Another method to preserve your identity is to simply get an anonymous e-mail address. Although not yet popular, it's likely they will be more widely embraced in the future. The accounts are set up with no record of the user's true identity. The user pays with anonymous electronic cash. The main problem with this method is that most service providers are not comfortable with this arrangement, so they simply don't offer it to clients. Accounts are available at http://www.c2.org/ through Community ConneXion.

***Internet** Underground* encourages you to be a good anonymous citizen. Respect the guidelines set by the operators of your remailer. Follow the limits set on both quantity and size of messages. Use encryption software. Remember that anonymity is a privilege. We must all exercise our right to privacy, anonymity and free speech in order to make it an accepted part of our society, so that those who try to threaten it never succeed. Anonymous shouldn't be a dirty word any longer; we've got to clean up its image.

More information is available online on the Web at::

Anonymous Remailer FAQ: http://www.well.com/user/abacard/remail.html

Mixmaster Remailers: http://www.obscura.com/~loki/remailer/mixmaster-faq.html

Remailers: http://www.world.net/~pirovich/remail.htm

and on Usenet in alt.anonymous.messages, alt.privacy.anon-server and alt.anonymous. **O**

TO REMAIL THROUGH THE CYPHERPUNKS REMAILERS, you need to attach a header, or a series of headers, to your mail message which will direct its path through the maze of machines.

The simplest way to tell your e-mail program what to do is to place two colons (::) next to each other on the very first line of the message. On the next line, type, Request-Remailing-To: and the address of the remailer. Skip one line. Then begin your normal message.

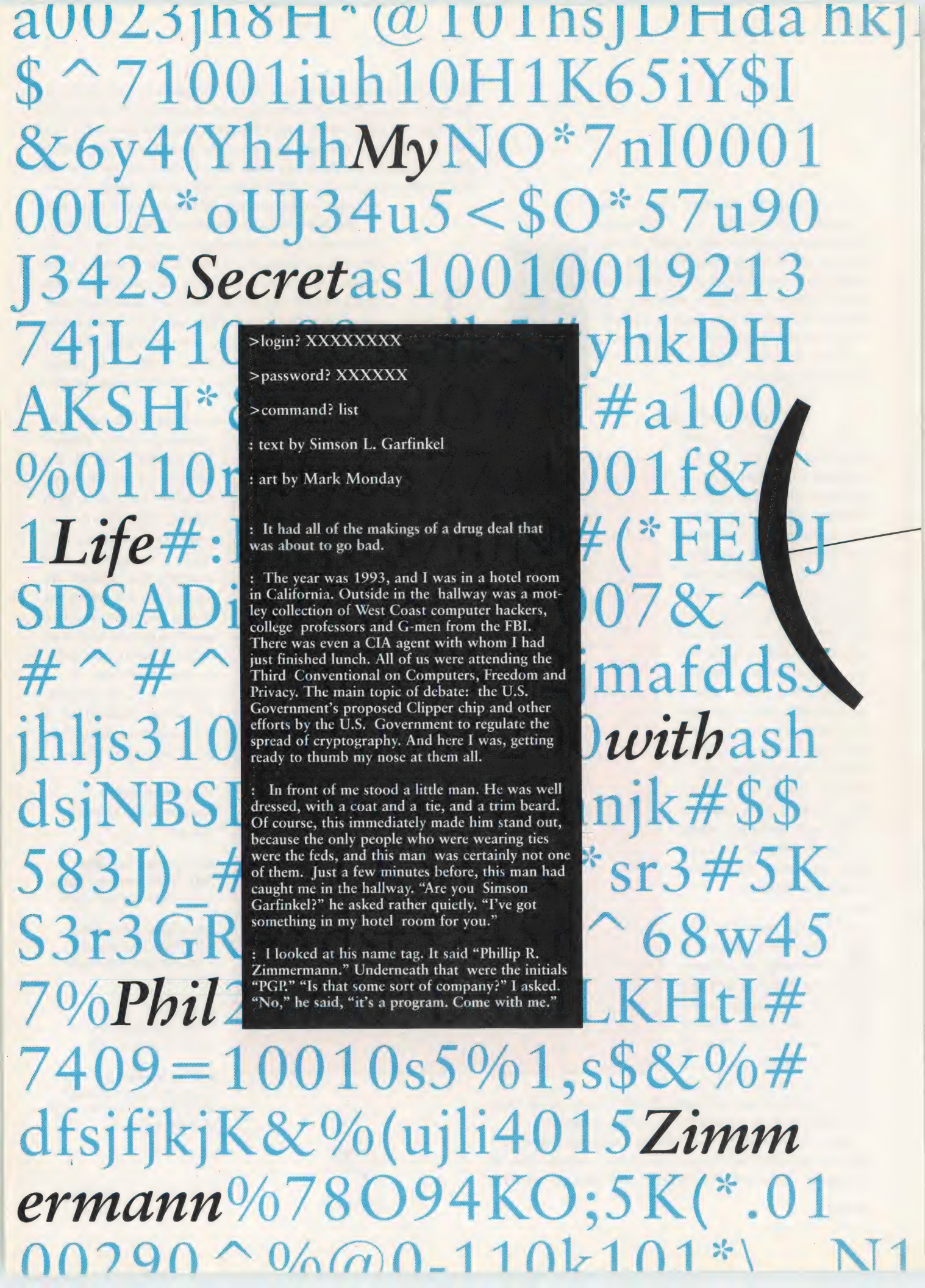
An example of chain remailing, the most secure form:

```
From: iu@mcs.net
To: remailer@rebma.mn.org

::
Request-Remailing-To: remail@xs4all.nl

::
Request-Remailing-To: recipient@destina-
tion.com

Here is the text of my top-secret
message.
```

You can use only one remailer, but it is not very secure, because the remailing machine contains both the sender and the destination. Chaining (sending to two or more remailers) is the preferred method, because your return address is completely divorced from the destination.

You must also be very careful to use the correct spelling and capitalization, as UNIX machines are case-sensitive and will not respond to instructions that they perceive to be spelled incorrectly.

END.



>login? XXXXXXXX

>password? XXXXXX

>command? list

: text by Simson L. Garfinkel

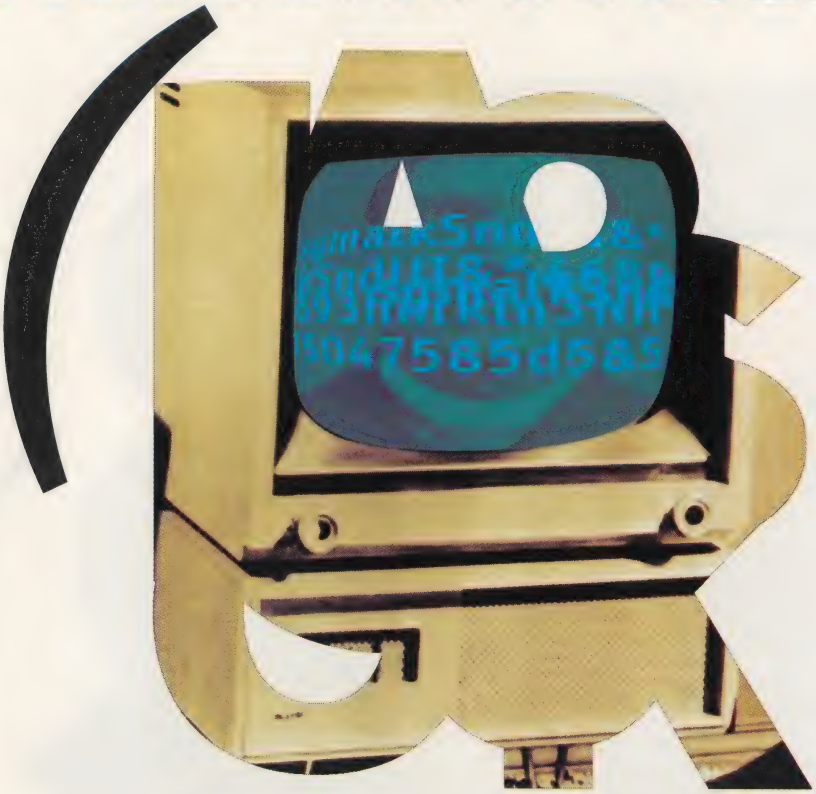
: art by Mark Monday

: It had all of the makings of a drug deal that was about to go bad.

: The year was 1993, and I was in a hotel room in California. Outside in the hallway was a motley collection of West Coast computer hackers, college professors and G-men from the FBI. There was even a CIA agent with whom I had just finished lunch. All of us were attending the Third Conventional on Computers, Freedom and Privacy. The main topic of debate: the U.S. Government's proposed Clipper chip and other efforts by the U.S. Government to regulate the spread of cryptography. And here I was, getting ready to thumb my nose at them all.

: In front of me stood a little man. He was well dressed, with a coat and a tie, and a trim beard. Of course, this immediately made him stand out, because the only people who were wearing ties were the feds, and this man was certainly not one of them. Just a few minutes before, this man had caught me in the hallway. "Are you Simson Garfinkel?" he asked rather quietly. "I've got something in my hotel room for you."

: I looked at his name tag. It said "Phillip R. Zimmermann." Underneath that were the initials "PGP." "Is that some sort of company?" I asked. "No," he said, "it's a program. Come with me."



: Today Zimmermann and his program are well known, but back in March 1993, I didn't know the difference between PGP and a designer drug. But I was intrigued, so I followed him back to his room. "You are carrying a laptop computer, aren't you?" he asked.

: "Of course," I told him. "Doesn't everybody?"

: Once we were safely sequestered inside his room, I opened up my backpack and took out my Dell subnotebook. I hooked up the floppy disk drive, looked around, and was startled to see that there was a third person in the room. The third man handed me a floppy disk and told me to copy the files onto my hard disk in a special directory, "\PGP".

: "Technically, what we are doing is illegal," Zimmermann told me. I laughed, a little nervous.

: What made the our activities culpable was U.S. patent 4,405,829, which had been issued on on Sept. 20, 1983, to three MIT professors—Ron Rivest, Adi Shamir and Len Adleman. The patent covered a new mathematical technique known as public key cryptography, and it gave the patent holders the right to sue and collect damages from anyone inside the United States who used their encryption technique without first getting permission. Three days later, the professors started their own company, RSA Data Security, to realize the promise of their discovery.

: RSA was a fundamentally new kind of encryption system—truly a breakthrough. From the dawn of human history until the spring of 1977, when the MIT professors made their discovery, every encryption system ever devised had a common flaw: the keys to unlock them. Until RSA, if you wanted to send somebody a secret message, you and that person first needed to agree upon a key that you would both keep forever secret. If anybody else knew your key, then your message was as secret as yesterday's newspaper.

: With public key cryptography, everybody has two keys: a public key and a secret key. The key that locks does not unlock. So you can publish your public key in the phone book or post it on the Internet, and people that you have never met can use that key to send you secret messages. And nobody, not even the National Security Agency, can crack those messages open unless they have the matching secret key.

: There is another advantage to RSA cryptography as well—one that is often overlooked. Because the encryption algorithm is based on the a series of mathematical equations, rather than a codebook or a simple cipher, you can make RSA codes harder to break simply by using longer keys. Sure, codes with variable-length keys existed before RSA, but none of them were any good. With RSA, for the first time in the world, it was suddenly possible for ordinary citizens to create codes that the world's strongest governments couldn't crack.

: Together, these two features are RSA's greatest attraction to users, and its biggest threat.

: RSA Data Security stumbled during its first few years of operation until it was taken over by a burly Greek powerhouse named Jim Bidzos. Within a year, the company had turned profitable. Within two years, Bidzos had signed licensing agreements to put RSA's patented technology into Lotus Notes and Novel Netware. And he had also received a visit from the Feds. RSA's technology, they told him, was a threat to the nation's security. If other people overseas should start using RSA to communicate, our government wouldn't be able to spy on their electronic communications. And thus, in the interest of national security, RSA Data Security was barred from selling its best cryptography overseas. But that didn't stop Bidzos from selling the technology within the U.S., and during the following years, he built up a respectable list of companies who were bundling the technology into their products.

: In November 1986, Bidzos flew to Boulder, Colo., to meet with two promising programmers: Charlie Merritt and Phil Zimmermann. For nearly a year, Merritt and Zimmermann had been trading phone calls. Merritt had developed a version of RSA that ran on the early Z80 computer; Zimmermann wanted to take Merritt's ideas and make the program on the IBM PC. The two had planned the meeting for nearly a year. Bidzos, for his part, was looking for some programmers to help him on a contract.

: But what started out as a great opportunity for everybody to meet ended terribly—the chemistry simply wasn't there. Zimmermann said that he was thinking of moving to Canada, where his taxes wouldn't support the U.S. war machine. Bidzos, it turned out, needed the programmers to work on a contact for the Navy. After some tense moments, the three decided to go for dinner. Bidzos and Merritt wanted to go to "eat thick slabs of dead cow, drink, and smoke some fine cigars in a dim steak house," Merritt recalls. Zimmermann took them to a well-lit vegetarian restaurant.

: Before Bidzos left, he gave Zimmermann a copy of a program called MailSafe, a simple DOS-based application that allowed people to create public and private keys, encrypt files with RSA and certify keys. (Bidzos would later say that PGP ripped off all of the ideas in MailSafe; Zimmermann says that he lost the copy that Bidzos left and never ran the program.) Merritt stayed with Zimmermann the rest of the week, teaching Zimmermann everything there was to know about doing the high-speed arithmetic required for RSA. "When I left, PRZ knew how my codes worked.

He knew 95 percent of what I knew. He was now a 'real danger' to the national security machine," recalls Merritt.

: That's where things stayed for five years, until the summer of 1991. That summer, the U.S. Senate was considering a resolution called S.266, the Senate's 1991 omnibus anti-crime bill. At the insistence of Senator Joseph R. Biden (D-Del.), a sentence was inserted that read "it is the sense of Congress that providers of electronic communications services and manufacturers of electronic communications service equipment shall ensure that communications systems permit the government to obtain the plain text contents of voice, data and other communications where appropriately authorized by law."

: Many people who read this legislation took it as a direct ban on the use of cryptography within the United States. Simply put, if the Biden language had become law, it would have been illegal to use encryption within the United States that the FBI couldn't crack. (Other bastions of liberty, such as France and Singapore, already have such legislation on their books.)

: S.266 was a shot heard round cyberspace. Throughout the country, the proposal caused numerous phone calls and letters to Washington—usually to congressmen who had no idea what encryption was, let alone that there was a growing controversy surrounding its use. But in Boulder, Colo., S.266 did something very different: It inspired Phil Zimmermann to finish his long, drawn out encryption program.

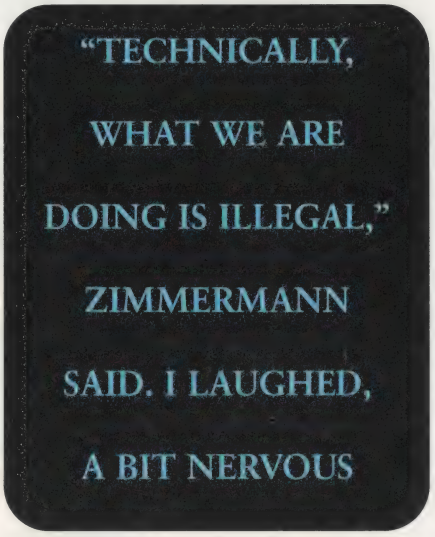
: That program was PGP 1.0. Like MailSafe, PGP 1.0 allowed people to create public and secret keys, to encrypt files and to certify keys belonging to other people. When it looked like the whole thing was working, Zimmermann gave it to a friend who posted it on the Internet.

: PGP 1.0 had a lot of problems. For starters, the RSA algorithm was good, but PGP 1.0 also used another encryption algorithm of Zimmermann's own devising. Called "Bass-O-Matic," the algorithm was not secure. But unlike other programs, PGP was released with the complete source-code, meaning that other programmers could take the program and replace the buggy parts with more stable stuff. It took an international group of programmers working from the fall of 1991 through the fall of 1992, but finally a new version of PGP was released. Called PGP 2.0, this version replaced Bass-O-Matic with a well-known encryption algorithm called IDEA, included a user interface that supported multiple human languages (French, English, Spanish and German, to name a few), and had an improved algorithm for compressing files before they were encrypted (because there was no way to compress files afterward).

: And, of course, the better PGP got, the more of a threat it posed to RSA Data Security. So just as PGP was beginning to catch on, lawyers for RSA Data Security were sending letters to universities and online services, such as CompuServe, demanding that they remove PGP from their software libraries. Even though PGP was free software, they said, it implemented algorithms that were patented.

* * *

: Back in the hotel room, Zimmermann explained to me that he had promised RSA's lawyers that he would not distribute any more copies of PGP. But that wasn't going to stop him from making sure that people got it—or from telling me his story. And over the following months, Zimmermann and I spoke often about what he was doing. A year later, the Computers, Freedom and Privacy conference was held in Chicago. I remember looking around the hotel's



lobby, when I ran across an editor from the MIT Press. He wanted to know if I knew of anybody who was interested in writing a book.

: "I'm not sure," I said, then excused myself. The editor hadn't said anything, but I was under contract to be writing a book for the Press. Somehow, though, other projects had come up, and I had never gotten around to it.

: A few minutes later, I ran into Zimmermann. "I want to write a book about PGP," he told me. Talk about serendipity.

: Over the next few months, Zimmermann and the Press talked and talked and talked. Zimmermann didn't just want to publish a book *about* PGP—-he wanted to publish the program. Every single line. The reason was that he wanted to thumb his nose at the United States' antiquated laws regarding the export of encryption programs. Although it's illegal to export computer programs that implement unbreakable cryptography, as Jim Bidzos learned, it's quite legal to export books that have programs printed in their pages. So why not just print the program in an Optical Character Reader font. that could be scanned in by computer, the way groceries are?

: It wasn't that easy, of course. Even though Zimmermann didn't care about the patents on RSA, MIT did. After all, MIT owned the RSA patent, and had merely licensed it to RSA Data Security. So MIT Press first needed to figure out a way to legitimize PGP in the eyes of RSA Data Security.

: For a few months, when it looked like MIT was getting cold feet, Zimmermann came back to me and asked if I knew of any other publishers that would be interested in printing his book about PGP. I said that I would look around, and called my editor at O'Reilly & Associates, which had published my first book (*Practical UNIX Security*, 1991). It turned out that my editor at ORA was very interested in a book on PGP. So I put together a book proposal and an outline for Zimmermann, who had never written a book proposal before.

: A few months later, Zimmermann called me back and said that it looked like he was going to go ahead with the MIT Press after all. The reason: MIT had figured a way to legitimize PGP. It turned out that RSA had recently published a program called RSAREF, which was a free implementation of the RSA algorithms that was being made available for non-commercial use. All Zimmermann had to do was to take out his encryption algorithms (the ones that Charlie Merritt had taught him how to write), and put in the routines from RSA Data Security. What a hack! O'Reilly & Associates would no longer be needed.

: When I called my editor to break the bad news, we decided that a book about PGP was too good an idea to give up. If Zimmermann wouldn't write it, my editor said, then I would have to. So I did. ●

O'Reilly & Associates published Simson Garfinkel's book *PGP: Pretty Good Privacy* in 1994. Phil Zimmermann's books *The Official PGP User's Guide*, and *PGP: source code and internals*, were published in 1995 by MIT Press.

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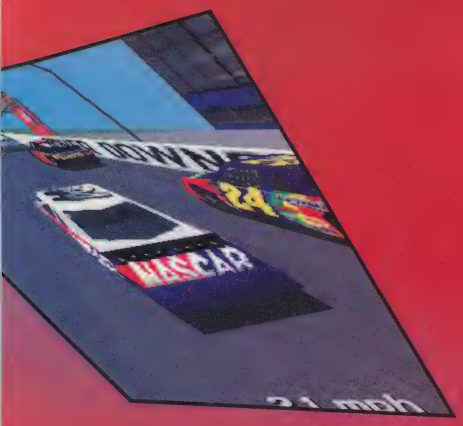

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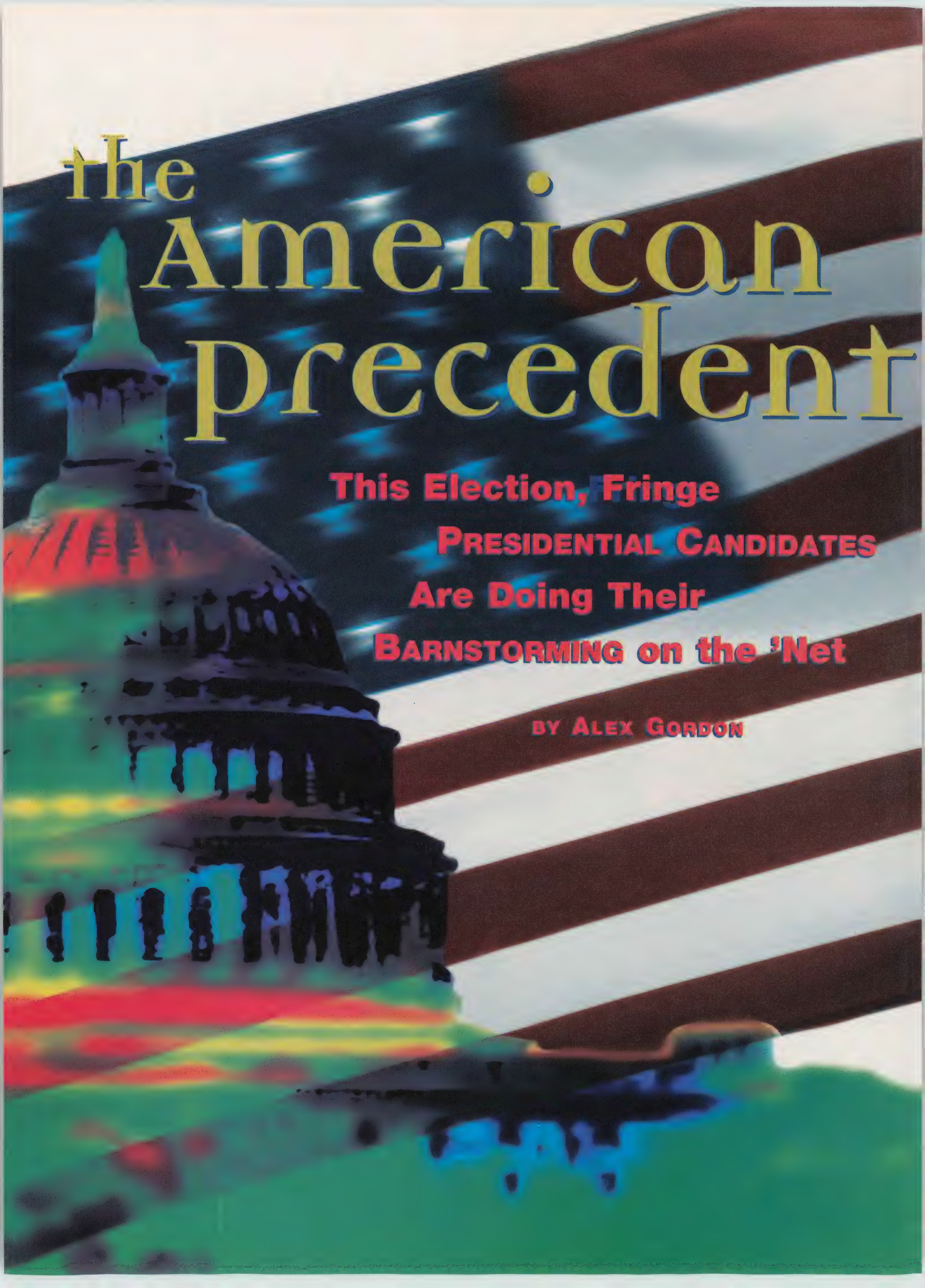
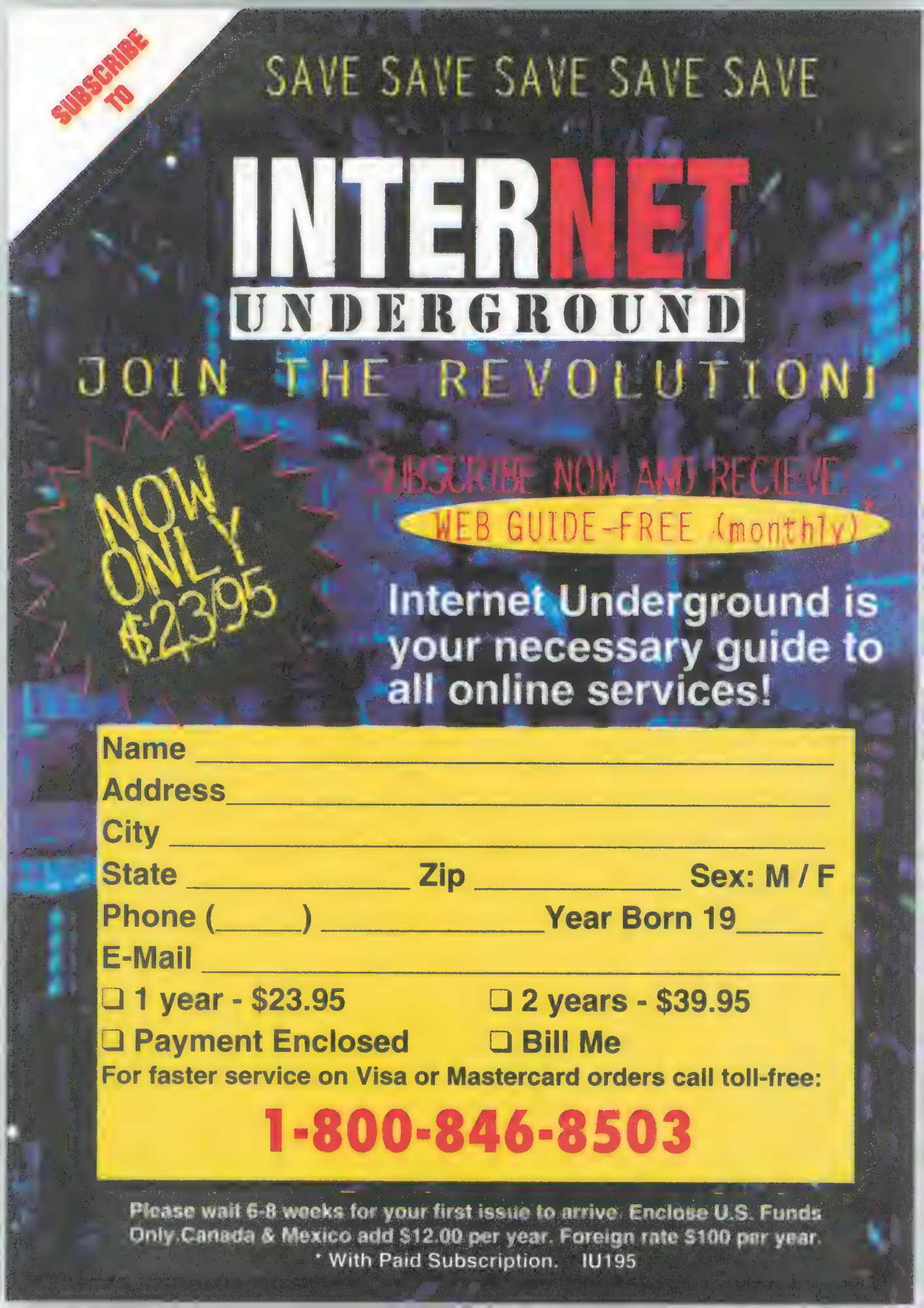


the American precedent

This Election, Fringe Presidential Candidates Are Doing Their Barnstorming on the 'Net

BY ALEX GORDON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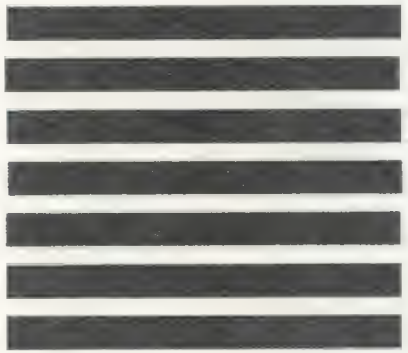


INTERNET UNDERGROUND
P.O. BOX 1502
LOMBARD, IL 60148-9624

So you wanna run for president? Surprisingly, all you need to do is fill out a form and file it with the Federal Election Commission, and viola—you're a presidential candidate. You can register if you're under age, you can register your pet, you can even register a fictional character. Actually *running* for president is another story.

As any of the 190 or so presidential candidates who have filed with the FEC will tell you, actually mounting a campaign takes a lot of effort. You have to convince state officials to put you on the ballot for primaries, raise campaign funds, form election committees and most importantly generate publicity.

In the prehistoric age, promotion meant printing posters, passing out buttons, kissing babies and pestering the media with press releases, but to quote Bob Dylan, "the times they are a-changin'." Just as anyone else with a message or a product to sell has discovered, the Web is a simple, relatively cheap and surprisingly effective tool for generating a buzz.

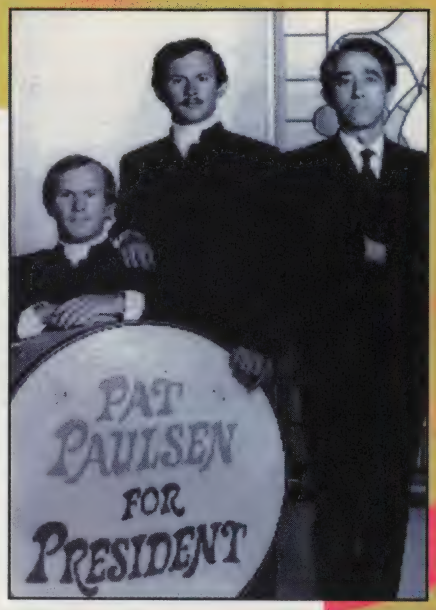
For mainstream candidates like Bill Clinton and Bob Dole, who have the national media following them around reporting on what they ate for breakfast, the effects of a Web page may be minimal, but for the Bruce Daniels, Tom Shellenberg, Dr. John Hagelin and other "fringe" candidates of the world, a Web page can be a godsend.

For Daniels specifically, a liberal candidate running as a Democrat and a professor at the University of Winnipeg (he holds a dual citizenship), having a Web page means that despite a severely underfunded travel budget, he can reach a national audience. "Rather than having to publicize the campaign, we put up a Web page for a couple hundred dollars," says Mark Baldwin, Daniels' press secretary and Internet correspondent.

Baldwin says he had to persuade Daniels to use the Web as a campaign tool. "I had to convince him that with thousands of potential visitors, the instant exposure would mean way more impact than any other use of $300." Baldwin says that hits at the site have grown exponentially, growing to 40 or 50 a day in December. He's hoping the primary season will mean that number will continue to grow.

Beyond publicity, the Web can work to educate voters on a level that traditional media cannot. "The Web makes politics more intelligent, rather than just sound bites and pictures on the nightly news, voters can take the time to read the positions of all the candidates," Baldwin says.

Rafael David, director of Information Technology for the Natural Law Party, echoes Baldwin's comments that the 'net will result in a more informed electorate: "The Web provides a forum for people who are seriously interested in the issues and the solutions." So far, David says, the main benefit of having a Web presence for his party has been the increased interest of people, especially college students, who want to volunteer. David says hits are totaling 2,000 to 4,000 a day between the party's site and a separate site for their presidential candidate Hagelin. In anticipation of increased interest during the primaries when the party will start airing a 30-minute infomercial, the site recently made the switch to a private server with the capabilities to handle up to 100,000 hits.



Paulsen first entered the public eye with his dry editorials on *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour*

Web pages aren't just the tools of a new class of tech-savvy, political neophytes. Even veteran perennial fringe candidates such as comedian Pat Paulsen and unintentional comedian Lyndon Larouche have set up shop on the Web.

For Paulsen, now in the throes of his fourth campaign for the nation's highest office, the Web has been a blessing. The comedian, who rose to prominence doing editorials on *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* in the late '60s, says his biggest claim to political fame is that he got between 100,000 and 200,000 votes in the 1968 election, effectively putting Nixon in the White House by taking votes away from Hubert Humphrey. With the main source of revenue for his campaign being frozen TV dinner fund raisers, Paulsen says the 'net is extremely useful for attracting volunteers he otherwise would never be able to lure with his limited campaign staff of himself, his wife Noma and his daughter.

Perennial candidate Pat Paulsen was the first candidate with a Web site. There you can see him (left) with his wife Noma and their dog Yorkie or (right) debating the issues with Honest Abe.

The idea for Paulsen to do a site came last winter from a friend who ran a server in Arizona. Unwittingly, and despite the claims of Lamar Alexander, Paulsen was the first candidate to have a Web site, and of those candidates that have followed his lead, Paulsen says "most of their sites are pretty dull." One notable hit to Paulsen's site was a 45-minute visit from someone at www.whitehouse.gov, and although Paulsen says there is no way to know who in particular was doing the visiting, a couple of weeks later some changes were made to Al Gore's site that mimicked the content at Paulsen's. Noma Paulsen says she has been hard at work getting people to link their sites to her husband's. Her toils have translated to an ever-growing number of visitors. When their site was named Cool Site of the Day, they received over 7,500 hits, and the number would have been much larger except that the server couldn't handle the load.

Paulsen says he hopes that the secretaries of state, who effectively control who and who doesn't get put on the ballot for the primaries, take notice of the revolution happening on the 'net. Often, officials judge candidates by the amount of mainstream attention they are attracting and Paulsen says hits to a

Web site should not be ignored. But he concedes acerbically "people at the secretary of state probably don't even understand what the Internet is."

Perhaps the most unique of the fringe candidates with a Web presence is Russell Hirshon, who though only 34, will be 35 years old by the time the election comes around, old enough to serve in the remote chance he wins. A Web site developer by day and bartender by night in Washington, D.C., Hirshon actually ran for president in '92, utilizing e-mail to get his message out.

The Naturalist Party's Dr. John Hagelin

Hirshon has no grand illusions of winning; rather, his quest is part performance art, part voter-awareness crusade. "I want to spark the interest of young people," says Hirschorn whose political career actually reaches back to a mayoral bid against Marion Barry in '89.

While in '92 Hirschorn did most of his campaigning in person—going so far as to travel to Houston for the GOP convention so he could deliver a speech with his pants down around his ankles while sitting on a toilet outside the Astrodome—in '96 he says the main thrust of his campaign will be over the Internet. He says he's doing it this way to study the difference between the two approaches and also so that he can hold on to some of his bartending wages. So far Hirshon says the Internet has allowed him to have "a much broader reach at an enormous cost savings."

Besides having a funny site, a trait he shares intentionally with Paulsen and unintentionally with several other candidates, Hirshon is the only candidate who is running a contest from his site. By writing a brief essay you can compete for the chance to be Hirshon's vice president. Of course, that and a nickel will buy you a piece of Bazooka, but as Hirshon says, "You have to have a sense of humor about it all. My goal is to motivate young people to get more politically involved."

Despite the guarded optimism of the fringe presidential candidates on the Web, most political consultants and analysts seem to think the Internet will hardly be the great equalizer between Bill Clinton and Bill Hartwell.

"It's definitely a coming trend and a useful way to reach people who are active on the 'net, but not a high enough percentage of people are using the 'net yet for it to be that effective," observes ary Nordlinger, a Democratic media consultant based in Washington, D.C.

Speaking strictly in terms of the fringe presidential candidates, Nordlinger believes having a Web page won't make any difference in their overall chances. "A fringe candidate is a fringe candidate is a fringe candidate," he says. "When you have incumbent U.S. senators not making a dent, what chance do one of these guys have? I mean, Richard Lugar isn't exactly taking off like the space shuttle."

Ron Faucheux, the editor and publisher of *Campaign and Elections*, says candidates are clamoring for a Web presence for three reasons: to experiment, to appear high tech and cutting edge, and to create on a national level a tool to communicate with interested parties.

Faucheux agrees that the numbers just aren't there yet for the Internet to have a significant impact: "At this point it's just one more element in the media mix.

"The Internet gives (the candidates) an opportunity to reach people, but exposure and an active audience are two different things," he says, "It takes more than a Web page to reach people. If they're not interested, it doesn't do much good."

> "A fringe candidate is a fringe candidate is a fringe candidate."
>
> — Democratic media consultant Gary Nordlinger, on the impact of underdogs' Web sites

Faucheux would, however, recommend that candidates establish a Web presence. "It's easy and inexpensive to do it. You can reach people who are into it." But on the other hand, Faucheux cautions those who think the Internet is a panacea for their campaigns woes. "With the Internet you have to remember it's an elite communications tool—the users are usually people with a high level of education, and you can't forget that that is just scratching the surface of the electorate. The goal is to reach everybody."

So while it looks like the 'net's influence in the presidential political arena is still in its infancy, one political analyst, Jim Pinkerton, a White House aide to Reagan and Bush who now teaches at George Washington University, predicts on some level this year somebody will win a race because they used the 'net more effectively than their opponent. After that, Pinkerton says, candidates on all levels will have to consider seriously the capabilities of the 'net when mapping their campaign strategies.

Russell Hirshon's campaign uses humor to spark the political interests of young people.

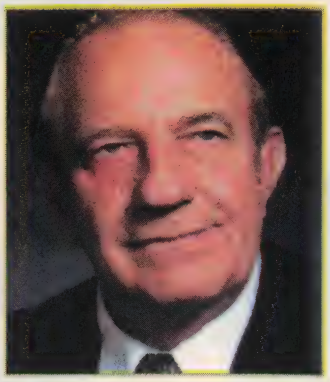
the electoral collage

You know Clinton, Dole and the rest of the front line...Now it's time to meet the cybercandidates from the fringe.

Every election has fringe candidates from communist stalwart Eugene V. Debs in the early part of the century to the most mainstream of the extreme, Ross Perot, who last election got 19 percent of the vote—and might have garnered even more had his vice president not been catatonic. Few fringe candidates ever get much coverage by the press, with notable exceptions such as Perot, George Wallace and Jesse Jackson, who managed to become media magnets. But with the advent of the Internet, even long-shot contenders now have a cheap and practical way to attract national attention.

A Web page makes perfect sense for candidates, always searching for the least expensive and most effective way to reach the widest audience. Plus, what better way to show constituents you are a forward-thinking, techno-savvy candidate than getting in on the digital revolution? But our readers are smarter than that. We wanted to judge the candidates not just on their platforms, but also their use of the Web as a medium. Putting up a single page pleading "vote for me" might be an easy way to get your message out; it's still pretty darn lame. The following list of fringe candidates is hardly conclusive. We ignored a few; those candidates whose sites wouldn't load (Rick Tompkins) and/or had pages that were incomprehensible (Neil Roberts).

To keep up with all candidates, mainstream and obscure, check out Vote Smart at **http://www.vote-smart.org** and Web Publishers Guide to the 1996 Candidates at **http://www.webpub.com/prez/home.html**



Charles Collins
Republican
Panama City Beach, Fla.

URL: http://computek.net/public/collins/collins.html

current job: *Operates a working ranch in Georgia*

political "experience": *Never held political office, but has worked a veritable cornucopia of jobs and fields including bank director, plumbing contractor, motel and apartment decoration, and in the landscaping and advertising fields. Collins says he vowed in 1948 to become a proficient artisan in every trade necessary in construction, from building layout to the front door lock-up. The candidate even operates his own equipment in his hay farming operation.*

why he's running: *He just wants to make America great once again.*

platform highlights: *Says he will eradicate debt, abolish the income tax and the IRS.*

why he probably won't win: *He's just to the right of Pat Buchanan.*

review of web site: *Good points include detailed instructions on how to help Collins get on the ballot. He loses some points for his itinerary page, which in mid-December had last been updated in September. His list of links are revealing, to say the least; they include both the John Birch Society and the National Rifle Association ("needs all Americans' support").*

Bill Hartwell
Independent
Madison, Wisc.

URL: http://www.execpc.com/~fbkdc/bill.html

current job: *Communication assistant at the Wisconsin/Arkansas Telecommunications Relay.*

political "experience": *Has never held political office. Four years in the Air Force, credentials as a minister.*

why he is running: *Fed up with current crop of candidates from "all three major parties." (Three?)*

platform highlights: *The National Self-Sufficiency Program, in which anyone who earns wages below the established poverty level would be provided supplemental support by way of health care, housing assistance, energy assistance, tax exemptions, and, if necessary, monetary assistance to bring their effective income up to the poverty level.*

why he probably won't win: *His views make too much sense.*

review of web site: *A pretty mundane page with no pictures. However, he's probably the only candidate with links to* Playboy, Hustler, *other sexually oriented sites and even a few Pagan destinations, notably absent from Bob Dole's home page.*

Tom Shellenberg
Republican
Livingston, Mont.

URL: http://www2.csn.net/~tshellen/

current job: *Author*

political "experience": *Wrote a book on how to balance the U.S. Fiscal Budget in one year,* Balance the Budget Now & How: The Silver Lining. *Three years in the army.*

why he is running: *He is "the only candidate with the right cure."*

platform highlights: *His plan to balance the budget in one year as outlined in his book.*

why he probably won't win: *Proposes sacrifices and some tax increases (see: Walter Mondale's platform).*

review of web site: *Nice use of blinking words so you know which page you're on. Shellenberg, unlike many other candidates, wisely uses a picture of himself on each page so at least you'll remember his face if not his message.*

Harry Browne
Libertarian
Tennessee

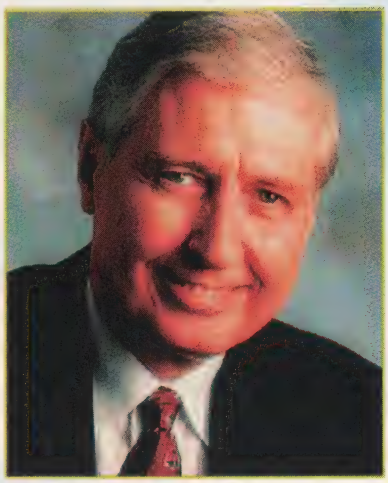
URL:http://www.Harry_Browne96.org/

current job: *Author, investment advisor*

political "experience": *Has never held public office. Self-educated financial advisor, the author of 10 books, a newsletter writer and a public speaker.*

why he is running: *To reverse the tide of big government.*

platform highlights: *Your stock Libertarian views toward less government interference in daily life. One of his campaign goals is to: "Have a good time. I want the campaign to be fun and exciting—for myself and for everyone who joins me. Libertarians are the party of prosperity and joy—not of sacrifice. So I don't want anyone participating out of duty—but, rather, because we'll enjoy discussing our ideas for a change, instead of getting bogged down in arguments over whether a new government program should take two pounds of flesh or only one."*



why he probably won't win: *Despite finishing ahead of Lamar Alexander and Richard Lugar in a recent poll, he still finished 11th behind Colin Powell, Bill Bradley and Jesse Jackson; however, none of them were even running.*

review of web site: *One of the most complete pages of all the long-shot candidates we found. You can read endorsements, download a contribution form, vote in cyberpolls and even buy bumper stickers. Plus someone at the Libertarian Party has a really cool scanner. All the photos of Browne look nice and crisp.*

Pat Paulsen
Democrat
Tujunga, Calif.

URL: http://www.amdest.com/pat/pat.html

current job: *actor, comedian*

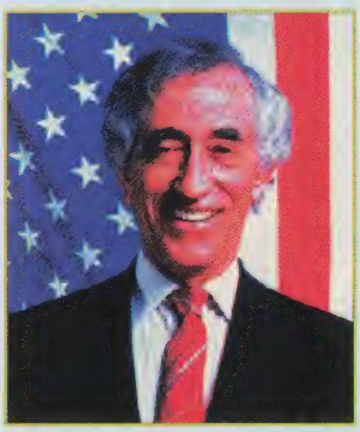
political "experience": *This is his fourth race for the presidency.*

why he is running: *Because the Democrats have lost their sense of humor.*

platform highlights: *On health care: "I don't think we need to care for healthy people." On the national debt: "Let the kids pay it—they still owe us rent and gas money."*

why he probably won't win: *America has no sense of humor.*

review of web site: *Lots of good chuckles here interspersed with the ubiquitous candidate features. Check out his amendments to the Constitution and the incredible coincidences between Paulsen and Abraham Lincoln.*



Dr. John Hagelin
Natural Law
Fairfield, Iowa

URL: http://www.hagelin.org/hagelin/

current job: *Director of the Institute of Science, Technology and Public Policy, a public policy think-tank at the Maharishi University of Management in Fairfield.*

political "experience": *Ran for president in 1992. Harvard-educated quantum physicist.*

why he is running: *He and the party "stand for conflict-free politics, prevention-oriented government and proven solutions to America's problems designed to bring national life into harmony with natural law."*

platform highlights: *He would solve the Bosnian crisis by sending in a group of 2,000 people "trained in effective technologies to reduce social stress, including the Transcendental Meditation program...This group would significantly and immediately reduce tension and conflict and promote an influence of coherence and peace throughout the region."*

why he probably won't win: *Peace, harmony and meditation may be a hard message to translate to Joe Q. Sixpack.*

review of web site: *Clear and concise site, with updated news of the candidate's speeches and appearances topping it off. Red, white and blue color scheme reminds us of something.*

Russell Hirshon
Independent
Washington, D.C.

URL: http://www.magnet.com/ russ4pres/

current job: *Bartender by night, Web programmer by day.*

political "experience": *Ran for mayor of D.C. in '90, president in '92.*

why he is running: *Raise young Americans' consciousness of the electoral process.*

platform highlights: *Promises include: "Drop the Import Ban on Cuban products and have myself one big fat cigar," "Outlaw parking tickets" and "Force Congress to do something for America that isn't politically or religiously motivated that is actually beneficial for all Americans."*

why he probably won't win: *He's half Bob Dole's age.*

review of web site: *Witty and irreverent, Hirshon's site is full of funny material detailing his earlier races. Plus, there's a contest for vice president. If you win, you'll be picked as Hirshon's running mate.*

Bruce Daniels
Democrat
Winnipeg, Canada

URL: http://www.daniels.winnipeg.mb.ca/index.html

current job: *Professor of History at the University of Winnipeg*

political "experience": *Has never held political office. Served two years in the Peace Corps.*

why he is running: *Wants to return the Democratic Party back to its liberal roots.*

platform highlights: *Build more bridges, roads, sewer systems and water treatment plants rather than more prisons. Decriminalize some categories of illegal drugs. He would fully support the National Endowment for the Arts and the Public Broadcasting System, but end all government subsidies to tobacco farmers.*

why he probably won't win: *Although he holds dual citizenship, America isn't ready for a Canadian president.*

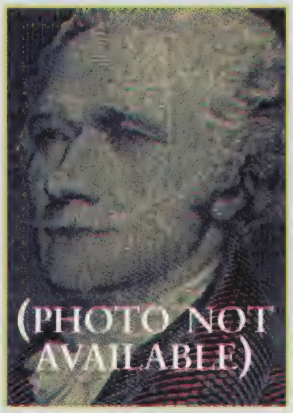
review of web site: *Solid, good site with American flag wallpaper, a nice touch. There's even an FAQ. Among the questions: "Did you ever smoke marijuana?" "Did you inhale?" and "Were you a draft dodger?"*

Morry Taylor
Independent
Quincy, Ill.

URL: http://www.webcom.com/morry96/welcome.html

current job: *President and CEO of Titan Wheel International, Inc.*

political "experience": *Never held office, but he says "transformed a once beat-up old factory into an international company traded on the New York Stock Exchange with profits projected for 1995 at $625 million and more than 3,000 employees in North America."*



why he is running: *No specific reason cited, so we'll bet it's to make this country a better place.*

platform highlights: *Says he will reduce the size of government, reindustrialize America, simplify the Tax Code and ban Political Action Committees.*

why he probably won't win: *People may not take a candidate seriously whose 1-800 number is USA-BEAR.*

review of web site: *Nothing special here. The site is not too extensive and the picture of Taylor never loaded despite several tries. Definitely could use some more spice.*

Irwin Schiff
Libertarian
Cleveland, Ohio

URL: http://www.webpub.com/schiff/

current job: *Author*

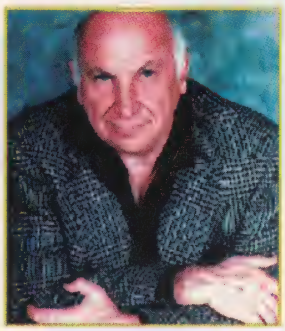
political "experience": *Fighting taxes, the federal income tax in particular over the last 27 years.*

why he is running: *To make a significant contribution toward promoting the Libertarian agenda.*

platform highlights: *Prohibiting the government from circulating worthless paper as legal tender. Abolishing the income tax, the minimum wage and the Federal Reserve.*

why he probably won't win: *Americans may want change, but getting rid of currency isn't what the vast majority had in mind.*

review of web site: *Pretty standard candidate site with all the essential information.*



Lyndon Larouche
Democrat
Loudoun County, Va.

URL: http://www.clark.net/larouche/welcome. html

current job: *Publishing and business activities related to the philosophical and scientific association which he participated in founding.*

political "experience": *This is Larouche's sixth bid for the presidency.*

why he is running: *Habit.*

platform highlights: *You got to admit, the guy has commitment. No specific plans if he wins, just rants about the election process.*

why he probably won't win: *Maybe because he's possibly CRAZY?*

review of web site: *The site won't be winning any design awards but the writing is always amusing. Example: "From what I have read in the major U.S. news media over the past 21 years, more U.S. newspapers, magazines and TV news programs have told more lies about me, more often, than any other candidate for president in the past half-century" or "Speaker Newt Gingrich is working to destroy the United States, with applause from backers in London, such as Lord William Rees-Mogg. If he succeeds in what he has proposed to do, Newt will kill a lot more Americans than died in World War II."*

The Fool's Guide to Online Love

BY GREG GRABIANSKI

Meeting a member of the opposite sex has become easier with the rise of online chatrooms and bulletin boards. You can meet, have sex and fall in love with that special someone without ever leaving your computer. Being an avid online dater, I would like to pass along a few of my cutting-edge insights and experiences to enhance your online dating pleasure.

Some Suggested Ice Breakers

When first logging on to a chatroom, some men find it difficult and awkward to make conversation. As in real life, it is always prudent to have an opening line or "pick-up" line when initiating conversation with a woman. Here are some of the more successful ones I've used. Feel free to use them yourself!

- Hi, do you know if this chatroom has a bathroom? (*Humor is always a good way to start.*)

- I'll bet we have lots of common interests. I enjoy long walks, tennis and sex. What do you like to do? (*Mutual interests! People love to talk about themselves.)*

- If you could see me, you would probably throw up—I'm disgusting. Lucky for me, we're online and you can get to know what a beautiful person I am beneath this foul, odorous body of mine. (*Tug at their little heartstrings.)*

- You are one beautiful woman. *(Flattery, even online where you can't see them, is a sure bet.)*

- Can I buy you a drink? Give me your address and I'll mail you $5—you just run out to a bar and buy a drink on me! (*Women love generosity.*)

- Hi! I'm typing these words by tapping the keyboard with the back of my head. (*Bragging shows self-confidence.)*

Some Commonly Used Shorthand Acronyms

When chatting with people online, typing can get tiresome. So users of online systems have developed a set of acronyms that they use as shorthand. Here are some of the more commonly used acronyms. Memorize them and use them when chatting online.

BBL: Be back later
GMTA: Great minds think alike
LOL: Laughing out loud
IMHO: In my humble opinion
CUP: Coughing up phlegm
MIDT: My iguana died Thursday
SMES: Stapling my eyes shut
HYNU: Hoping you're not ugly
JWAHPC: Just witnessed a horrible plane crash
WYWD: Wishing you were dead
JCIPOFDADIMG: Jimmy Carter is passed out, face-down and drunk in my garage
SMWCWTMDAS: Slapping myself with celery while throwing myself down a stairway

Emoticons

Another popular convention when interacting online is to use combinations of typed characters to create images that express feelings. These are called "emoticons." The most popular example is the smiley face, which is created with a colon and a right parenthesis. There are dozens of variations. Tilt your head to he left to see the faces:

)	smiling
(	unhappy
:- |	disgusted
:- V	shouting

Lesser-Known Emoticons

: - #	My darn cat scratched my mouth up!
:- B	I have horrible buck teeth.
: - F	I am holding a nail in my mouth. (mostly used on the carpentry BBSs)
: - () ~~~	I am vomiting.
:)))	I am a smiling fat guy with a double chin.
: - {)	I have a moustache and am very happy with it.
: >(	I have a big nose and need plastic surgery.
:- ^	I have a nifty spit bubble.
: -))....	I am drooling.
: >...(	I have a runny nose and it makes me sad.
: -]#	I have a cool grunge goatee.

CYBER-RESPONSIBILITY

Most people think that cyberdating and cybersex are all fun and games with no responsibility whatsoever. Just "Lee-dee-da-da-da, let's chat! Let's have cybersex!" And there's no consequences at all! But last week, I had a reality check. I was roaming my favorite chatroom, striking up conversations wth women, when suddenly an old cyber-girlfriend of mine logged into the chatroom. It was Sexylrma69.

Sexylrma69 and I were an online item for a couple of weeks. One night we began chatting and soon we were off to a private chatroom and well, we, you know...

Sexylrma69 and I met and had sex online every night for two weeks until frankly, I started to get bored with her. She wanted to chat with me constantly. One night I just said to her, "Hey, baby, I need my cyber-space." And that was that. I didn't hear from her for three months. Until last week in that aforementioned chatroom.

Sexylrma69: Hi, Grabby, I missed you.

GrabbyG: It's you...Hi.

Sexylrma69: Listen, there's something I'd like to talk to you about. Could we got to a private chatroom?

GrabbyG: Sure.

Sexylrma69: I was going to e-mail you about this, but it seemed terribly impersonal. I'm glad we can chat about this here.

GrabbyG: What's wrong?

Sexylrma69: I'm pacing back and forth, a worried look on my face. I'm wringing my hands.

GrabbyG: I'm scratching my head, confused.

Sexylrma69: I'm taking a deep breath. OK, here goes. GrabbyG, I'm cyberpregnant.

GrabbyG: What? How is that possible? I'm not dumb! It just can't happen...can it?

Sexylrma69: I don't know, but it happened. I'm pregnant. I'm sure of it.

GrabbyG: Wait a minute. We're on the Internet! I've never even met you in person! We never slept together in person. How can that happen?

Sexylrma69: You must be very potent.

GrabbyG: My face is buried in my hands. I have a disbelieving look on my face. Are you sure it's mine?!

Sexylrma69: You're the only one I've slept with either in person or online. It's you. You're going to have to send me money. I'm sure you'll do the responsible thing. My lawyer says that you should send me $500 a month.

GrabbyG: Of course. It's my kid and I'll be financially responsible for it. It's all just so stunning. I can't get over it.

Sexylrma69: When he gets older and learns to type, I'll let him visit online with you. I'll e-mail you my real name and address later so you can start sending those checks. Bye!

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO LOVE ONLINE

Unlike the hero of our story, it really is possible to meet someone online. A friend of mine, Beth, was living in Birmingham, Ala., when she started chatting with Michael of Austin, Texas. After about two weeks of cyberdating, Beth had her first phone date with Michael. About six weeks later, she and Michael met face to face, and they liked what they saw. Soon Beth found herself on a permanent trek to Texas.

"We were very lucky," Beth says. "And I think it worked out because we were honest with each other. Basically, there are two types of people who lurk behind the anonymity of the keyboard—those who are hiding and pretending to be something they aren't, and those who are forthright," Beth said. If you're ready to plunge right in to the cyberdating game, here's a sampling of starting points. *—Matt Manning*

WHERE TO FIND LOVE ONLINE:

Affiniti Personals
http://www.public.com/personals/affiniti

American Singles Non-Profit Dating Service
http://www.as.org/as/

Amoreee
http://www.kaiwan.com/~bayers/mates.html

Boston Phoenix Personals
http://www.phx.com/

California Dating Network
http://www.calweb.com/~swifty/index.html

Campus Singles
http://www.campusingles.com/

Carolina Singles
http://www.public.com/personals/carolina/

Chinese Dating Net
http://www.globalvillager.com/villager/CDN.html

Christian Singles Online
http://www.netrunner.net/~gigimia/singles/index.html

CupidNet
http://www.cupidnet.com/cupid

Cyberdating
http://www.cyberdating.com/

CyberFriends
http://dare.com/fr_main

Date.Net World Wide Dating Service
http://Date.Net/

DateMaker Personals
http://datemaker.com/

Future Now Astrological Compatibility Virtual Dating Service
http://www.futurenow.com/dating/astro_dating.html

Get Met on the Net
http://www.netrunner.net/~etw/getmet/

Internet Computer-Dating Service
http://computer-dating.com/

Jewish Singles News
http://www.catalog.com/jsn/index.html

Lisa the Matchmaker
http://tucson.com/matchme/

Lov OnLine
http://www.lov.com/

Match.Com
http://www.match.com/?gk222

MatchMaker Modem
http://www.dallas.email.net/

Nashville Personals
http://www.Nashville.net/personals.html

P.S. I Love You International
http://www.psiloveyou.com/

Prodigy Web Personals
http://prodigy.tpigroup.com/Prodigy/

Public.com Personals
http://www.public.com/personals/

Romantic Rendezvous
http://www.start.com/start/romance.html

Single Search National/International
http://nsns.com/single-search/

SinglesNET
http://www.singlesnet.com/

Together Dating
http://www.togetherdating.com/introductions/

Web Personals
http://www.webpersonals.com/

by Sarah Ellerman and Alex Gordon

ON the net with...

Sherry Turkle

In 1984, MIT Professor Sherry Turkle wrote *The Second Self*, a ground-breaking examination of the one-on-one relationship between the user and his or her computer. Well, as a map of Europe or the existence of this magazine can attest, a lot has changed since 1984. So, with the growth of the Internet expanding the reach of everyone's computers, it should come as no surprise that Turkle found ample fodder in the annals of cyberspace for a new book, *Life on the Screen*, a revolutionary exploration of the different facets of the virtual experience.

We met up with Turkle in her room at the Four Seasons Hotel in Chicago as she was wrapping up her book tour. That same day she received a particularly glowing review in *The New York Times*, so you can excuse her if she was in a glowing mood.

"I love this book...It's a very personal book for me, it's really become like a diary for me of my last 10 years," she says, catching her breath. "After *The Second Self*, I began to explore certain elements of what was continuing to happen in the computer world. All of a sudden, five years ago, I began to see the changes in the Internet. I believe you don't write a book until you have a book. Articles are one thing, but to me a book needs a sort of overarching reason. I saw what was happening online, and I had these experiences online, that for me had this postmodern sensibility and culture simulation. I felt, 'There's a book here,' and then I immersed myself in online life these last four years."

***Internet Underground*:** Your book deals primarily with the text-based portions of the Internet. How do you feel about the emphasis placed on graphics over text on the Web?

Sherry Turkle: I hate it! It doesn't have to be so much graphics.

IU: You're right, it doesn't *have* to be graphics, but people seem to think that having them is sexier and flashier, and because of that the substance is often lacking.

ST: I couldn't agree more. As a matter of fact, the biggest difficulty I've had in trying to convince people that something important is happening here has been with the most sensible and nicest people, who say, 'Look. I joined America Online. I sit there spending 15 minutes downloading this image, 15 minutes downloading that image.' I can't say to these people that they're wrong, because I have the same experience.

IU: How do you feel about 3-D chat rooms as opposed to text-based forms of chat?

ST: A lot of my work is about personal style and how computing is positive and interesting because it allows such a range of personal style and I think that for some people, the addition of the iconic interface makes a tremendous difference. It makes them more comfortable, it makes them feel more at home, but for some people it gets in the way.

IU: I have noticed that in text-based chat, there's a communal feeling, when all the text flies up on screen. But in a 3-D world, you wander around, having to physically approach another person for a one on one.

ST: Everything I've done with computing is different strokes for different folks, different styles for different people. I experimented with 3-D chat and I missed that sense of community from all the scrolling text and I saw that different people were able to relate better and feel more comfortable with it. It had some greater analogies to physicality for them, and I really think that for some people, it's better. More liberating, more freeing.

IU: I think you're right about personal style, and that's why we still have so many different operating systems and interfaces.

ST: Exactly. We are all vulnerable to falling into the trap of assuming that there's a right way and a wrong way, that we know what's a better way. I'm very skeptical about that whole perspective. There's not "a better way."

I think that we're going to stop thinking of 'The Internet' as capital T, capital I, and it's going to be all the different places and spaces and ways. Some places you'll be, you'll turn off the graphics, and some

meld
fracture
shatter
schism
Persona
disperse

places you'll be, you'll turn on the graphics. It's just going to be a very diverse experience. And it should be. And that's my answer to the whole cyberpornography thing. I mean, there are some places that will be adults only, places where you need to have restricted access, you need to have special codes, be the adult who signed up, and that's good. Then the rest of it can be free.

IU: So how do you react to programs like SafeSurf? Do you think that they're a good middle ground between censorship and a free-for-all?

ST: I think that if parents, in their home, want to establish some rules and use these programs to establish rules for their kids, but in their own home, then that's great. And if their kids *(laughs)* want to go out, and find this material...you know, at the computer museum in Boston, there are unrestricted computers, and tons of 8-year-olds, 10-year-olds, 12-year-olds.

I think it's good for parents to establish certain things within the home, but it's also good that there be places where there are no restrictions. I can well imagine that there might be communities and services where to join, you have to prove you're over 18, so an adult has to join, and adults are encouraged not to give their passwords out to kids.

IU: Well, that's how they handle it on all kinds of adult BBSs right now. I don't see why the Web should be any different.

ST: And I think that's fine. It's the responsibility of the adult who joins to keep that to him or herself. I don't want to say there's not a problem, but I don't think this is a problem whose dimensions we cannot approach. We do not need to have legislation and all that.

All these talk-radio shows, they say things like, "Well, we really want to ban all kinds of smut on the Internet, because it's so terrible... tell us what's really the most grisly, disgusting, gross, obscene thing you've seen...What kind of disgusting positions do people describe? *(adopts disappointed tone)* Oh. Anything more disgusting than that?"

It's really funny. They're not going to ban smut on the Internet so soon. I fear the people most interested in banning it are the people who are most interested in reading about it. I fear that my tour showed me the fatal flaw in their reasoning...they were all so fascinated by it. The ones who wanted to ban it most wanted the most dirty stories. It's crazy.

IU: In your book you talk about all the different identities a person can assume online. Are there any dangers of blurring the lines between your real and virtual self?

ST: It's tough to make these distinctions. I don't like to talk about "real" and "virtual" lives because I think that some people are having lives on the screen, and I don't want to say it's not real. For example, I talk to my sister all the time by phone. Do I really want to say that that's the "not real" part of our relationship? I want to say no. I want to say that it is real, and what it's about is making all of these mediums more permeable to each other. For instance, one thing that everybody says is that the quality of your interactions online after you've met the person are so much higher.

IU: What other benefits are there to investing in a life online?

ST: Many people develop skills online that they don't have offline. I call it the Cyrano effect of whether or not experiences you have online you can bring off-line and use them to enhance your possibilities and potential in the other world. Cyrano de Bergerac wrote letters, he created a virtual reality, and in that virtual reality, Roxanne fell in love with him, and he could never believe that the wonderful person, the spirit that he showed himself to be was the real him, was worthy of being fallen in love with. Cyrano was stuck in cyberspace.

IU: Do you think that the ease of trying on a new persona translates into any real-life difference in how people deal with race and gender? There's two possibilities: that people actually exchange information about their race and gender or that the Internet emphasizes that appearance is superficial.

"Some people are having lives on the screen, and I don't want to say it's not real."

ST: Actually, three things are happening. The first thing that's happening is that people are actually experimenting with playing another race, playing another gender, and insofar as people sort of relate to other people "as if" on the Internet, they find themselves being treated differently. I'm most familiar with this in terms of gender. You really are treated differently if you play a guy, I find, even though people know that you might not be a guy! It's so interesting, the way in which people are willing to accept what they see, in your presentation. It's been a learning experience for me, and for a lot of the women in par-

ticular that I've interviewed, who comment things like, you know, "God, when I'm online, playing a guy, no one offered me any help. It made me realize all the help I've been offered all these years. I wonder if being offered help has convinced me that I need help." So I think there's that consciousness-raising phenomenon.

There's also a true sharing of information. I mean, I know some white men who are on African-American bulletin boards and who say things on them like, "Look, can I be here? Can I ask? I just feel like you're talking about things I really want to hear about, I really need to know about, but are not available to me. I want to hang out." So that's the explanation part. So one is the swapping, one is the information, and what was the third?

IU: Just that the Internet might teach that it was irrelevant.

ST: Well, *life* teaches you that it is relevant. Now, the idea that we have this other space where it's less relevant...I'm interested in seeing how that plays out. The proof is going to be in how people translate what they're learning on the screen to their life off the screen.

I'm not warmed by the fact that there's this place where it's "irrelevant," when you get offline, and you apply for a job, and you're a woman, and it still matters, or if you're black and you're put at the end of the line.

IU: What do you think about meeting online with the objective of a real-life romance? Do you think that's a good way to begin a relationship?

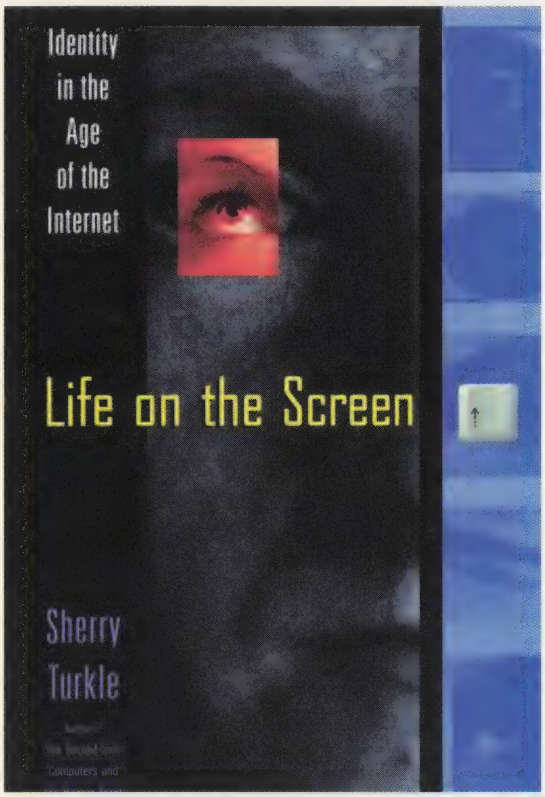
ST: I think people meet people however they can. People are lonely, they want to have connections. I think the key is that I would follow the same rules as the rules that they give in a personals column. The first contact with the person in RL should be in a public place, a well-lit public place *(laughs)*.

IU: Do you think people are often disappointed when they do meet?

ST: Yes. I think the possibility for fantasy is just enormous, and online, you're only seeing one aspect of the person. Mostly, I hear a lot about disappointments, and I hear some great successes. And I think that's sort of the way life is.

IU: I was really interested in the part of the book where the guy read over the transcripts of his online love affair, after the emotion had gone, and said, "There was nothing there! I personally generated all the feelings that accompanied these words."

ST: Well, he fantasized it. But we do that in real life, too. The interesting thing about the Internet is that it makes that so much more obvious and apparent and dramatic.



Sherry Turkle's book examines the social and sexual identities we create online

IU: I wanted to ask a little bit about cybersex and infidelity. Is it cheating to have a virtual relationship or is just something you have to decide in your own terms?

ST: That is definitely something that people should decide in their own relationship. If both people want to consider this...interactive pornographic literature, I think they have a right to do that. I just think they should be always keeping in mind that there is another person there, and people are going to hesitate before getting into it, because it's going to be a lot more obvious that there really are people involved. You start to get in deeper than maybe you'd hoped you would.

IU: I think that people are growing to understand that sex is more in the mind, from the excitement that's generated from cybersex.

ST: Well, that's *good.*

IU: When you recall an experience you had online, is your memory of sitting at the computer watching text scroll by, or is your memory of the suggested experience?

ST: A combination of the two. It's so betwixt and between, so unclassifiable. What flashes to mind is not just a picture of the text that scrolled—yet I know that I was in my office.

IU: I also wanted to ask about the possible dispensability of the body, if you've met people who ever express the wish to discorporate or download consciousness into a computer? Are you familiar with that urge at all?

ST: I've heard people express that urge who hate their bodies, who are dissatisfied with their bodies, it ranges from hate to frustration to being tremendously disappointed in their bodies because of their body's weaknesses, people who are ill, people who are disfigured. And I've also heard people be very anxious about it. As much as they enjoy online life, they also fear that aspect of it which makes them uncomfortable. It's a very complicated issue.

Where we are now, in a very healthy way we're showing a tremendous amount of attachment to our bodies, and we're concerned about bringing life online and making life offline permeable to it. Bringing the two together is really the cultural adventure for our day.

Note: Portions of this interview took place in a later conversation via phone. The two conversations have been combined for reasons of clarity.

by Justin Ware

ON the net with...

SPACE Ghost

Just because superheroes get to wear tights and shrug off bullets doesn't mean it's an easy gig. The unemployment line for cartoon heroes stretches longer than Plastic Man, and it's seldom pretty—after a few years of pounding villains, cartoon stars are often replaced by newer good guys fighting tougher foes. Before you can say "Wonder Twin powers activate," Zan and Jana are flipping burgers and Gleek is working for spare change with an organ grinder down on 42nd Street.

Space Ghost has changed all that. A multimedia powerhouse, the former intergalactic beefcake has not only weathered his post-saving-the-Universe phase, he's thrived in it. Space Ghost Coast to Coast, *his talk show airing on the Cartoon Network, has become a cult phenomenon, with a motley slate of guests ranging from TV's Gilligan, Bob Denver, to R.E.M.'s Michael Stipe to exercise guru Susan Powter. Now, with the opening of Ghost Planet at* **http://www.ghostplanet.com,** *Space Ghost stands poised to expand his empire even further.* IU *caught up with Space Ghost at the Locust Club, Ghost Planet's late-night hot spot, to discuss his recent foray into cyberspace, the love life of a cartoon character and the I.Q. of Thundarr the Barbarian.*

FROM SAVING THE UNIVERSE TO SAVAGING THE BEE GEES, SPACE GHOST GOES WHERE LENO FEARS TO TREAD

HAVING DUMPED DINO BOY, THIS INTERGALACTIC BEEFCAKE LOOKS TO DISPLACE LETTERMAN

Internet Underground: *When did you first start surfing the 'net?*

Space Ghost: I guess I've been skiing the 'net since, oh, about 10:30 a.m. this morning. What's that? Right. Surfing the 'net. Whatever. Truth is, I'm relatively new to the Internet scene. Moltar is always pushing me to get with the program. I mean, the first time I heard "World Wide Web," I thought the Black Widow had ensnared your planet in some diabolical scheme. *(IU* note: the Black Widow is a villain from Space Ghost's original series, *The Space Ghost and Dino Boy*.)

IU: *Where do you hang out on Ghost Planet? What parts of Ghost Planet didn't make it into the Web site?*

SG: My favorite spot is probably the Studio, located just inside of Ghost Planet Industries. The idea of having a conversation with myself is irresistible to me. I could spend days and days in there.

But I have yet to see the Ghost Planet Commissary and Video Arcade in the Web site. They make the blackest coffee in the universe and always have the latest video games, like Earth Invaders.

IU: *How does* Space Ghost Coast to Coast *benefit or suffer from being on the Web?*

SG: I don't think the show can suffer from being on the Web, unless we lose viewers to Moltar's lake of fire. And it's a great benefit, really, because people really need to see where you've been in order to know where you're going. I think I heard that on *Oprah*.

IU: *What do you say to your critics who accuse you of being a beefy post-adolescent living out a testosterone-filled fantasy?*

SG: Ghost Planet to Earth: I'm a cartoon. Hell-o!

IU: *How did you enslave Zorak, your former archenemy, into serving as your bandleader? Is he getting paid overtime for being the Ghost Planet receptionist?*

SG: Fortunately, Zorak was still enslaved where I had left him at the time my original series was canceled, in Omegan Prison. I like to think of *Space Ghost Coast to Coast* as my own little work-release program. Two years ago, Zorak was peeling space potatoes in Omegan Prison. Now he's peeling open envelopes filled with gushing fan mail! As for the receptionist, that's actually Zorak's second cousin, Stephanie. Uncanny resemblance, isn't it?

IU: *How do you avoid the leagues of starry-eyed fans who scour Ghost Planet for any contact with you?*

SG: Easy. Inviso-Power! It comes in handy for so many things. Free movies. Concerts. Avoiding that second date.

IU: *How much do you get paid? What do you think of Letterman's huge contract with CBS?*

SG: Like all cartoons, I am paid in a currency known as the Smackeroo. All I can tell you is that they count them out individually, "One smackeroo...two smackeroos..." and it takes a very long time. Letterman's contract, from what I understand, is short on Smackeroos.

IU: *Are you seeing anyone right now?*

SG: No, I'm not. I am, however, writing a book that sums up my views on dating, *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus, So What Am I Doing in Albuquerque?*

IU: *What do you feel is the future of technology?*

SG: Judging from my limited experience on the World Wide Web, I'd have to say the ability to download 3-D images of Pamela Lee from *Baywatch*.

IU: *Whatever happened to your erstwhile sidekicks Jan and Jace?*

SG: Jan and Jace? Let's just say they got a copy of the home game. I did not invite them back to partake of my current show. Last I heard, they were deeply into Scientology.

IU: *How does cyberspace compare to outer space?*

SG: Well, you can't download the lyrics to "Dancing Queen" in outer space.

IU: *What about the Web do you consider evil?*

SG: The thought that Stephanie Miller has her own Web page.

IU: *Last, but not least, a question I have a wager on: Who would win a fight between you and Thundarr the Barbarian, and why?*

SG: Yours truly, Citizen Ware. Here's a hint. In the superhero world, Thundarr's nickname is "Genius." Ask him to think an abstract thought like "What is the sound of one hand clapping?" He'll be tied up for hours, and you don't even have to lift a finger. You heard it here first. ○

Space Ghost has come a long way since his days with Dino Boy. Back in the 1960s, his thundering baritone was most often heard foiling Zorak the Mantis or Moltar from the Volcano Planet—now, after the premiere of *Space Ghost Coast to Coast* in 1993, it's more often heard interviewing David Byrne or trading barbs with Bobcat Goldthwait. Ghost Planet takes *Coast to Coast*'s unique talk-show universe and extends it a step further: Once you touch down on the Landing Pad, you can check out everything from the Planetarium of Shameless Self-Promotion (self-explanatory) to the Museum of High Culture (more of a misnomer). Our favorite sites:

THE VAULT

For all those vintage *Coast to Coast* clips, this is the place to go. Whether it's for great Space Ghost bloopers or a strange moment with Bob Denver (is there any other kind?), the Vault will quickly introduce you to the bizarre world of a talk show hosted by a guy in a cape. The Vault also contains an Episode Guide tracing the show's history from its first episode (Susan Powter and the Bee Gees) to its latest (Matthew Sweet and Catherine Bach, a.k.a. Daisy from *The Dukes of Hazzard*).

THE MAIN STUDIO

The highlight of Ghost Planet, for us, was the Main Studio. Using Artificial Intelligence technology, visitors can type in a comment and get an answer back from a chatterbot, allowing an interview of sorts with the galactic superstud himself. Be careful—*IU* interviewer Justin Ware caught Space Ghost on a bad day:

SG: Hold your breath till I tell you to stop...ready...HOLD IT!
JW: Are you trying to kill me?
SG: Yes...yes, I am trying to kill you!
JW: Someone help me!
SG: Help you what?
JW: STAY AWAY FROM ME!
SG: You don't say!
JW: GOD NO... STOP, PLEASE, SOMEONE HELP ME!
SG: Send an S.O.S. for help! Can't help ya.

Maybe we'll just stick with the Planetarium of Self-Promotion.

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Interesting Ideas

Bill Swislow, creator of *Interesting Ideas*, tells me without a shred of self-consciousness that he likes Don Knotts and White Castle. My immediate reaction is that this is dangerous ground to tread: Sure, many people have a fond spot for Barney Fife, but White Castle? Home of the gutburger? What kind of human admits that?

"I love the idea of it, of course, more than the reality," explains Swislow. "It is a little rough on the system." And Don Knotts? "I've always loved Don Knotts, and I'm always surprised, when I do searches, that there doesn't seem to be a Don Knotts site. Not that I'm really doing one, but I'm always surprised that no one else has."

Of course, even if they did, they probably woud not analyze Knotts' repressed virility or the moral economy of Mayberry. jJst as few sites would paint the Cleaver family from *Leave It to Beaver* as a grim reflection of '50s malaise, as Swislow does: "A close inspection reveals a familial purgatory worthy of Tennessee Williams—toned down for TV, certainly, but still consumed with rage, sexual turmoil and plain old mendacity. This family needs help."

This 39 year-old Chicagoan's take on pop culture is obviously not your typical vapid homage. Swislow's Web site, which went up in September 1993, sprung of his own small publication containing "stuff I'd written that I didn't have another outlet for." Initially distributed to "a group of friends and friends of friends," Swislow's mini-zine consisted mostly of "weird, quirky, stupid things" he fel t the need on which to comment. There was only one problem: His major passion of his, photographs of outsider folk art, didn't translate well to black-and-white zine reproduction.

He found the Web provided a more fitting medium. "I do a lot of traveling on back roads and take a lot of pictures," says Swislow. "I had all these photos, and I never could use them properly in this printed thing I did, because my reproduction wasn't good enough. This seemed like a golden opportunity."

Swislow used the opportunity well. From signs announcing, "Good News! Fried Dough" to buildings covered with grass, these images are mesmerizing; after exploring his online roadside art gallery, one quickly understands why Swislow is fascinated by this bizarre art form. The Web just provides the forum.

"The 'net is the ideal venue for any self-publisher, because it's inexpensive and quick, and you at least have the fantasy that millions of people could look at it," says Swislow. "It's sort of like winning the lottery—the odds that any one person is going to win the lottery are like one in 6 million, and the odds that anyone's going to look at something I write on the 'net are like one in 25 million, but at least I can fantasize that it's out there for people to see."

Swislow's knowledge of the 'net has served him in good stead in his career. A journalist by trade, Swislow now designs sites for the *Chicago Tribune*, which, he says, approaches the 'net in a very different manner. "It's the opposite of my personal approach. At a newspaper, the idea is to do

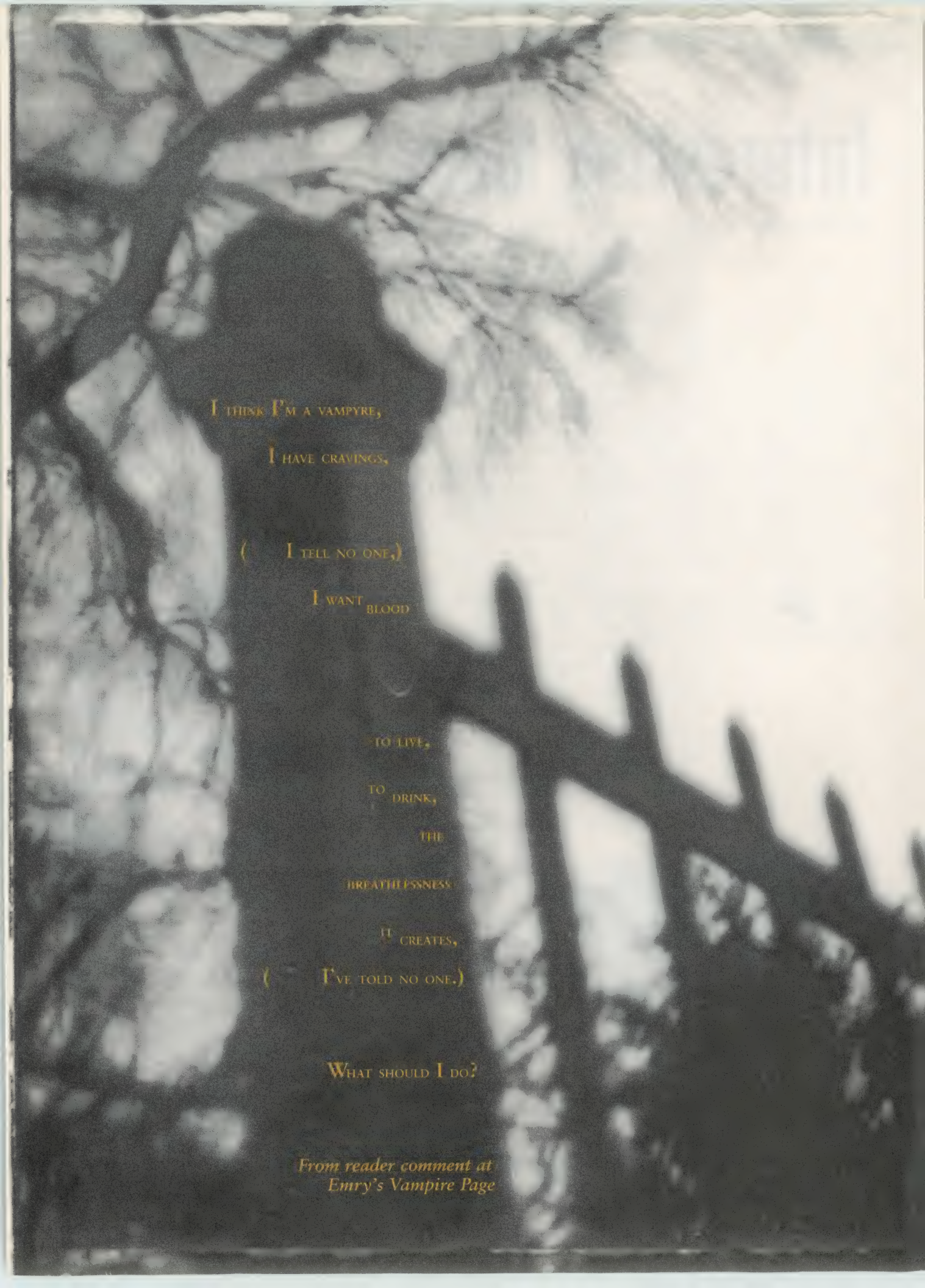
BELOW, THE "BEST COMIC STRIP EVER," NANCY; RIGHT, BILL SWISLOW ATOP A GIANT RABBIT.

something very broad to get as many people as possible, which is the opposite of what's really built a lot of the best Web sites: eccentrics like me who are interested in one subject and just do what we want."

But doesn't designing sites all day cut into his folk-art and pop-cultural treatise time? Is *Interesting Ideas* falling prey to another talented Webmaster yanked into designing for a corporation? Not so far. "It hasn't had much effect on that. My own stuff usually sucks up far more time, but it's other things that suffer, as we all know." If history serves as any indication, some other cultural icon will catch his fancy or wrath soon enough, and a few more pop dissertations will find their way onto the site, accompanied by pictures of chairs carved from soap or bottle-cap toys. Does he ever worry about running out of ideas? Not really. "You know, when you're a crank, it comes easily."

A closer look at this month's #1 site

SPOTLIGHT



I THINK I'M A VAMPYRE,

I HAVE CRAVINGS,

(I TELL NO ONE,)

I WANT BLOOD

TO LIVE,

TO DRINK,

THE

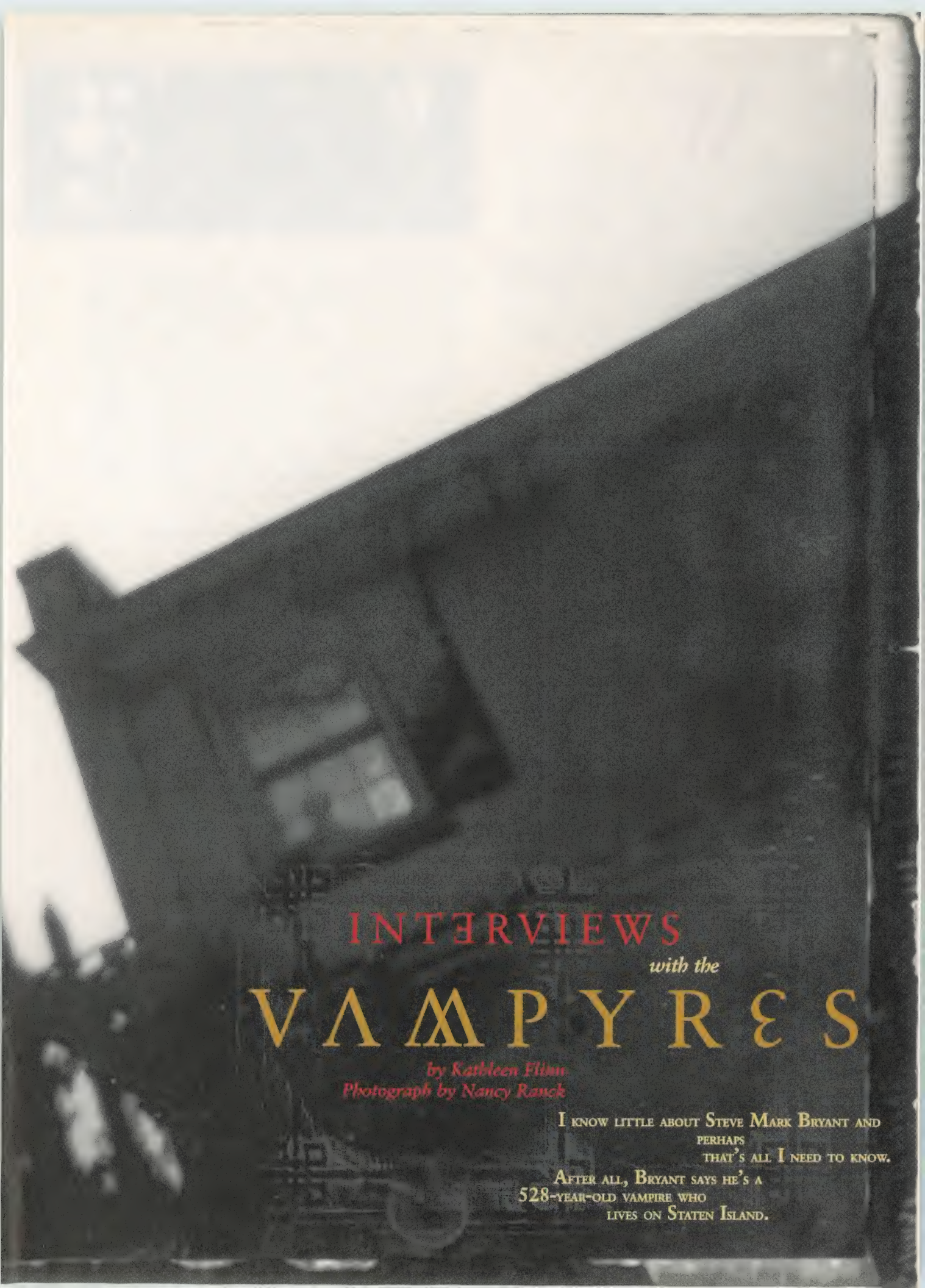
BREATHLESSNESS

IT CREATES,

(I'VE TOLD NO ONE.)

WHAT SHOULD I DO?

From reader comment at
Emry's Vampire Page



INTERVIEWS *with the* VAMPYRES

by Kathleen Flinn
Photograph by Nancy Rauck

I know little about Steve Mark Bryant and perhaps that's all I need to know. After all, Bryant says he's a 528-year-old vampire who lives on Staten Island.

We met through Emry, the keeper of a vampire Web page. Bryant's ominous response for an interview: "I wish to know your intentions. We do not take ridicule lightly, so be sure to take us seriously. I will do all interviews over the 'net...you will never see a photo of me nor hear my voice..."

In our following volleys of e-mail, Bryant (using the address AcE@planet.earthcom.net) claimed he was originally born in Romania and transformed into a vampire at age 24. Mortals misunderstand vampires, he said. Humans believe in myths; they think vampires have the choice not to hunt on the flesh of others.

>katflinn: What is the daily existence of a vampire like?

AcE: Just like yours only we hunt, and experience more than you due to our advanced senses...such as sight, smell and hearing.

>katflinn: What is it like to drink someone's blood?

AcE: A rush...a high...It is a great pleasure for us, and extremely satisfying...But humans get pleasure too, for there is no greater feeling than a Vampire's "kiss."

>katflinn: Have you ever been married?

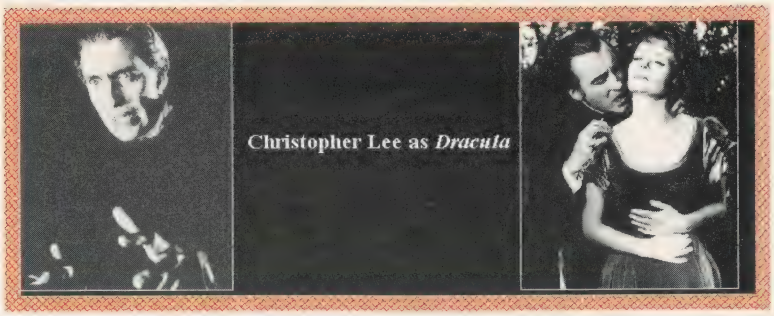
AcE: Yes, once...before I was born unto this life...

>katflinn: What do you think of mortals?

AcE: I have many friends among them...they are gullible, though...I feed only on the assholes of your species...the evil...Your race is a strange one.

Perhaps Bryant was playing on what he hoped was my gullibility. Is he really a vampire? *C'mon.* Vampirism may be the most popular way to walk on the wild side since cybersex. Without gullibility, (or, to be kind, a willing suspension of disbelief), the 'net would be nothing more than stock prices, Zima ads and *Cycle World* online. Who would want that? Not me. I wouldn't have met Bryant. Or Lamorte.

Late last summer, Lamorte introduced himself on the inter-relay chat channel #vampyre with a standard "good evening,"



and graceful bow on screen. He tried to enchant me with his vampire-like qualities. Lamorte (which loosely means "the dead" or "the death" in French) said he was 300 years old and a real vampire. He had tired of being alone and wanted to find more of "his kind," which he said he knew could possibly be out there, typing in the dark. Intrigued, I queried about his background and his family. He still missed his mother, he had died by angering another vampire and he had loved a remarkable woman in the late 1800s whom he had never married. Too painful, he said. When others asked how often he had to kill, he referred to ripping flesh as a darkly succulent pleasure. Not enough; I wanted some proof.

katflinn: So tell me something that happened in 1825.

LAMORTE: Pardon me, I do not understand.

katflinn: Well, if you've really been alive that long, you should remember.

LAMORTE: I do not play parlour games, my dear.

katflinn: C'mon, I've got *Timetables of History* open right here. It will be fun.

LAMORTE: As Lamorte said, he does not play parlour games. Especially with mortals.

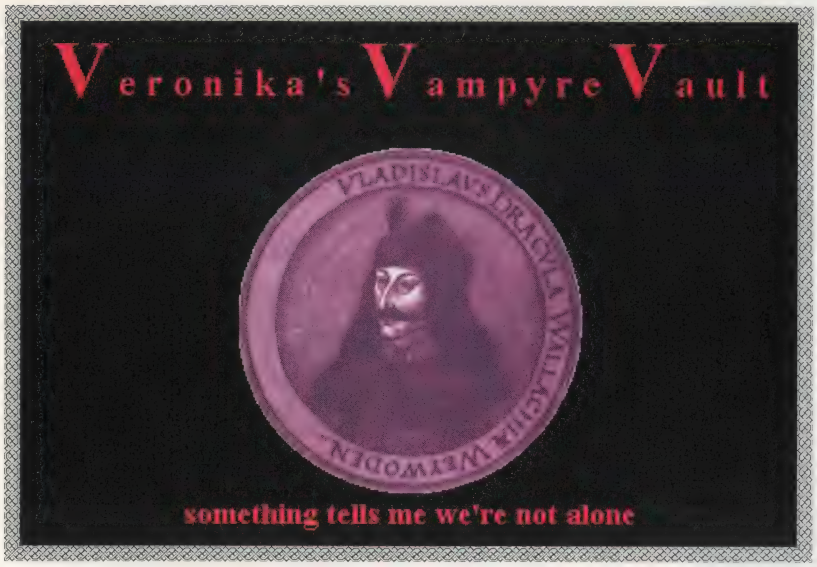
katflinn: Too bad. I love Scrabble.

Whether you believe in vampires or not doesn't matter. If the people behind Lamorte and Bryant do not believe they are vampires, then they are certainly fascinated enough to want to play one, safe in their anonymity, perhaps simply personifying the darker side of two average mor-

tals, tapping away in a bedroom, snickering at their antics like Beavis or Butt-head.

The 'net is not a normal place. Despite the ads for America Online, it's not a cyberversion of a wine-and-cheese get-together with Mr. and Mrs. Baby Boomer looking up *Time* articles. On the 'net people can be anything they want: a beautiful, curvaceous woman or a blood-sucking, seductive creature of the night. The curious thing is that no one knows the truth behind the words on the screen. Some believe such cyberfantasies are destructive, allowing the illusion of real interaction to subsume, even denigrate, the true self. But for most, it's just a release.

Maybe that's why role-playing games abound



on the 'net, especially the popular *Vampire: The Masquerade.* Through the game, people take on the roles of vampire or vampire hunter and play a mental and psychological dance trying to keep up the "masquerade," not revealing which they might represent. Some surfers take on the roles without playing the game. They show up in chat rooms, on IRC channels, newsgroups, multi-user domains (MUDs) or they e-mail Web site creators of a darker "nature." We found dozens of pages related to vampires, real or fiction, role-playing, Dracula and Anne Rice homages or spin-offs from the characters she's created. (None of the 20 or so Webmasters claimed to be vampires.) Even America Online keeps a standing Vampyre Inne chat room open; on weekends, there's as many as six or seven such rooms, all packed.

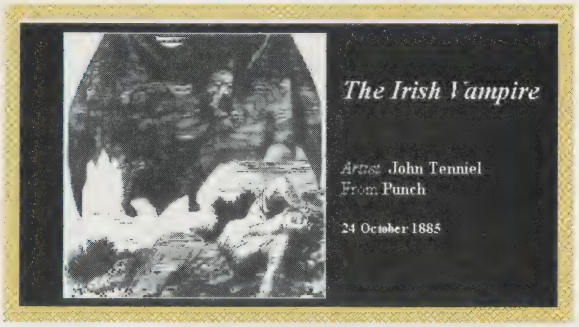
"I get probably three or four pieces of e-mail a day from people saying either they want to drink my blood or asking me how they can become vampires—and I only run a links page!" said Carrie Carolin, 26, who oversees the heavily trafficked Dark Side of the Web at http://www.cascade.net/darkweb.html. "I always want to tell them, 'Hey, there's a Red Cross down the street.' I'm not sure why I get more mail from vampires than from others. Maybe they just have more time on their hands during the days since they're hiding from the sunlight or something."

At the Vampire Duck Page, Greg Henry gets lots of mail and even offers a match-up service for humans seeking vampires and vampires seeking humans. "I receive far more of the 'I'm a human and would do anything to become a vampire.' This is the heart of the interest in vampires, mind you. It isn't the vampires that make up those hitting all these pages, it's the humans."

The Dark Ages

Vampire legends go back to 125 AD, to the Greek tales of nomadic spirits. Gypsies migrating west from north India, carried their tales of blood-sucking creatures from the Far East with them when they migrated to Transylvania, not long before Vlad Tsepesh Dracula was born in 1431. The family name came from the word Dracul, which meant dragon or devil, because his father used the dragon on coins.

Vlad had a few quirks, like impaling victims on sharpened stakes while enjoying a leisurely dinner to the sounds of their torturous cries. His popularity, if you can call it that, helped bring vampirism to the masses. Cultures throughout the world have developed their own version of vampires over the years. Some, such as the African Asanbosam are normal vampires except that they have hooks instead of feet. They tend to bite their victims on the thumb. In Malaysia, vampires are known as "the



bajang," and normally take the form of polecats, according to Veronikas' Vampyre Vault at http://www.sirius. com/~veronika/vampyre.html

Most of the vampires on the 'net seem to take their stage cues from the Anne Rice chronologies, started with her infamous *Interview With the Vampire.* In

SIMILAR VEINS OF INTEREST

Vampires Only
http://www.vampyre.wis.net/vampyre/index.html

Vampire: The Masquerade Information Page
http://acacia.ens.fr:8080/home/granboul/Vampire/index.html

The Vampire Chronicles
http://www.xroads.com/pages/gpalmer/vampire.html

Emry's Vampire Page
http://ucsu.Colorado.EDU/~whitneym/vamp.html
Excellent site; has a list of vampire e-mail addresses

Orlock's Threshold
http://www.nosferatu.com
Excellent site; the source of many photos in this story

Vampire Duck Page
http://www.cs.utk.edu/~ghenry/vampired.html

The Cabinet of Dr. Casey
http://www.cat.pdx.edu/~caseyh/horror/index.html
One of the most famous Web sites—for a reason

Vampire WWW Server
http://www.vampireweb.com/vampire

B.J. Zanzibar's World of Darkness
http://silver.ucs.indiana.edu/~adashiel/wod/wod.html

House of Pain
http://www.abdn.ac.uk/~u06mrm/pain.html

The Dracula Page
http://www.ucs.mun.ca/~emiller
Academic page of a professor specializing in Dracula

Guide to the Children of Darkness
http://www.maths.tcd.ie/pub/vampire/intro.html

#alt.vampyres Home Page
http://www.reed.edu/~ematson/vamp/alt.vampyres.html

Malkavian Web page
http://www.nauticom.net/users/erehwon/

OTHER SOURCES ON THE 'NET

Vampire mailing lists
vampire-l@wizards.com - Discussion of the White Wolf World of Darkness and Vampire: The Masquerade
camarilla-l@wizards.com - Vampire fan club

Gopher: Cerebus gopher site
gopher://cerebus.acusd.edu/11ftp:pub:Role-Playing:Horror:World of Darkness:

Newsgroups
alt.games.whitewolf is specifically for White Wolf games, including Vampire: The Masquerade
alt.vampyres general vampire
alt.books.anne-rice

FTP Sites
Vampire FTP site by Stuart Wildson in Australia.
ftp://slave.city.unisa.edu.au/

IRC
#vampyre
#vampire

Rice's novels, the vampires of old transformed from evil, blood-sucking diableries into blood-lusting, sexual characters who are simply just misunderstood.

"I think the current attraction is a sort of sexual omnipotence that Anne Rice created in her vampyre characters. Everyone wants Lestat (the character played by Tom Cruise in the movie) and Lestat can have anyone he wants. Is there any greater fantasy?" said a college student in Colorado who goes by the name Emry and maintains an extensive vampire site. "Personally, I've always been attracted to the dark side of things. I have a sort of morbid fascination, the kind that doesn't just slow down for car accidents, but

PEOPLE MAY BE GOOD IN

actually stops and takes pictures. Vampires, in the days before Anne Rice, were sinister and threatening. They were frightening and, perhaps, morally repugnant, but they had powers and freedoms that many people covet."

Even those new to the 'net may notice the odd proliferation of content on some interests, vampires among them.

"The interest in Dracula is quite widespread," notes Elizabeth Miller (pictured above), a professor of English at Memorial University in Newfoundland who specializes in 19th-century British Gothic fiction and a regular writer in the listserv Vampyres. "I created a Dracula home page mainly in response to the many requests I get for information, especially about my two visits to Transylvania." At her site, through a mix of photos and travelogue, you can take an academic view of the subject, with Miller as a guide.

But her site doesn't really explore the "dark" side of the genre and that's what most people seem to be after. Horror and general freakiness have always attracted legions of fans, but it could never be considered a mainstream interest as say, Martha Stewart. But on the 'net, with a disproportionate number of

sites devoted to cult films and horror films, it might seem as mainstream as apple pie and mother (Norman Bates' mom, anyway).

Part of the reason for this morbid fascination, say Webmasters, can be found in the logic of demographics. Surfers may simply be more likely to seek out what they can't find in their real worlds: namely, adventure and forbidden excitement.

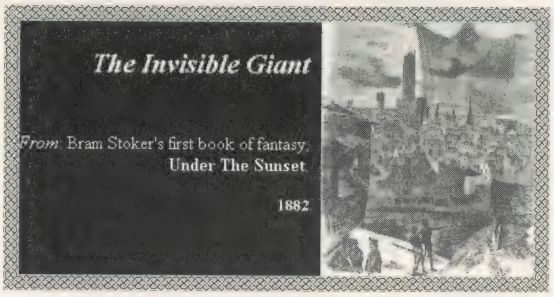
"The typical cybernaut is white, middle class, and for the most part, they live rather bland lives. They don't see a whole lot of 'darkness,' and find it exciting. For most gamers I know, escapism does play a large part of it," says Abe Dashiell, 24, a computer consultant in Bloomington, Ind., who maintains B.J. Zanzibar's World of Darkness.

Add to that demographic a group of people who might, with the right prompting, be tempted to sit for hours alone in the dark and bingo! "I think that people who already feel alienated from society empathize with the vampire," Dashiell says. "If a person feels alone and adrift, I can see why they would be attracted to the vampire myth. After all, a vampire is powerful and romantic and if a person already feels out of touch with others, the price might not seem so bad. I can't say that I think that is particularly healthy, but it is understandable."

The anonymity of the 'net adds to the ability of users to take on vampire personas and live another, unattainable lifestyle through simple strokes of their keyboards. You can move from lover to lover, try to feast on another's flesh and boast of a life spanning a millennium without fear of reproach.

Klaus Kinski in *Nosferatu - Phantom der Nacht* (1979)

"People on the 'net are able to express their inner thoughts and feelings, without fear of reprisal, due to the relatively anonymous nature of the 'net," said Erehwon, keeper of the Malkavian Web page. "I believe they personify man's eternal struggle. They are doomed by their very nature of drinking the blood of others, to do evil, yet they still retain the ability to fight back against this and to redeem themselves. I think that recently the majority of people are attracted to the vampire mythos because of their very erotic nature."



"People may be innately good in their behavior, but their thoughts are a different thing," says 19-year-old Donald Chaloupka, a student at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, N.Y., and creator of the Vampire Server.

BEHAVIOR; THEIR THOUGHTS ARE A DIFFERENT THING...

Evil may lie in the hearts of all men, even if few ever act upon it.

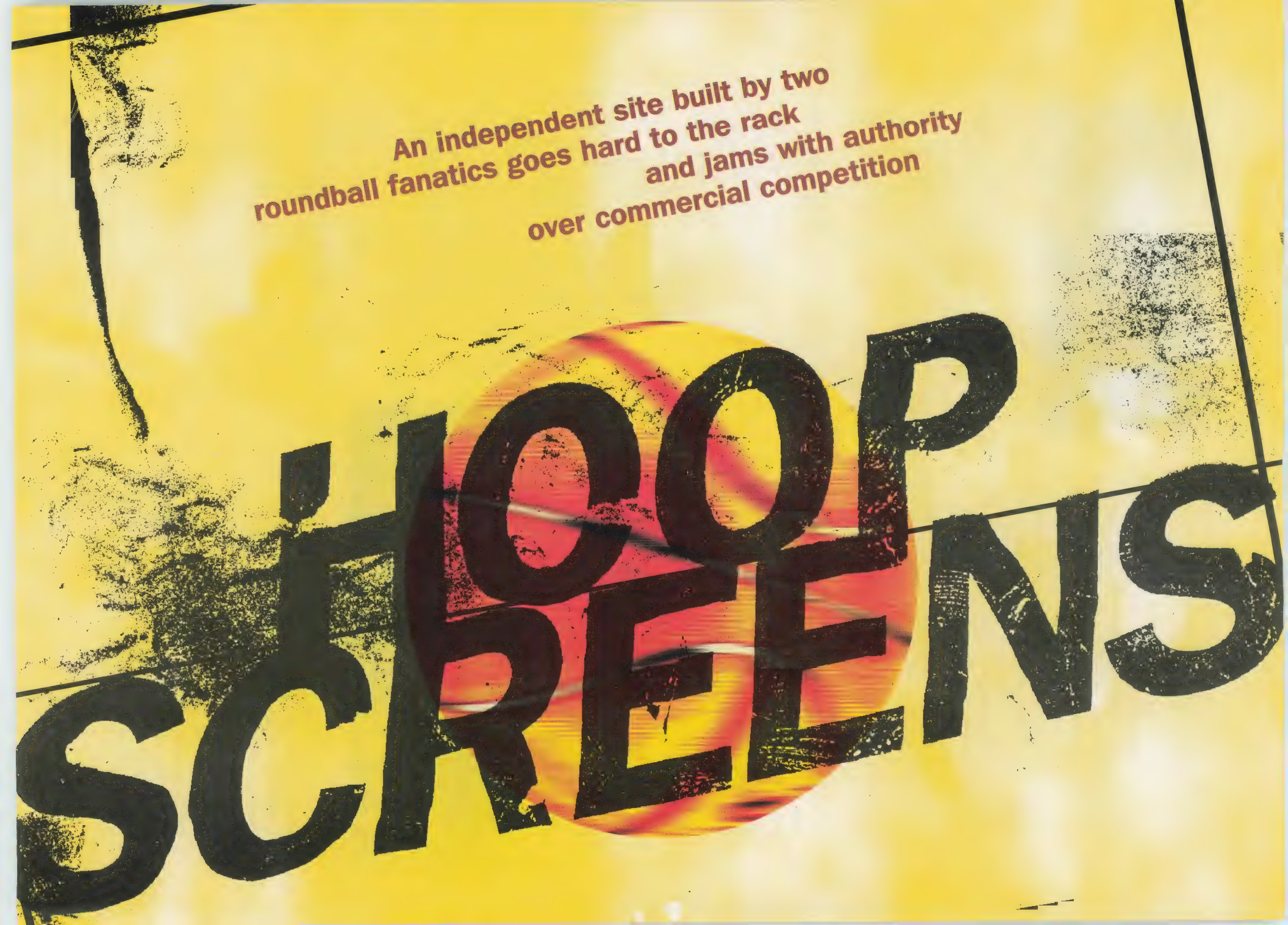
The 'net is being presented more and more as a frightening, ominous element of our culture. Between hype over bomb-making or hysteria about kids and cyberporn, technology once again has taken some flak for the problems in general society that manifest in a new way. People fear technology as they fear change, and they are being taught to fear the Internet, Emry noted. He says, "With that kind of propaganda, who else but the truly strange and dark would dare venture onto the 'net?"

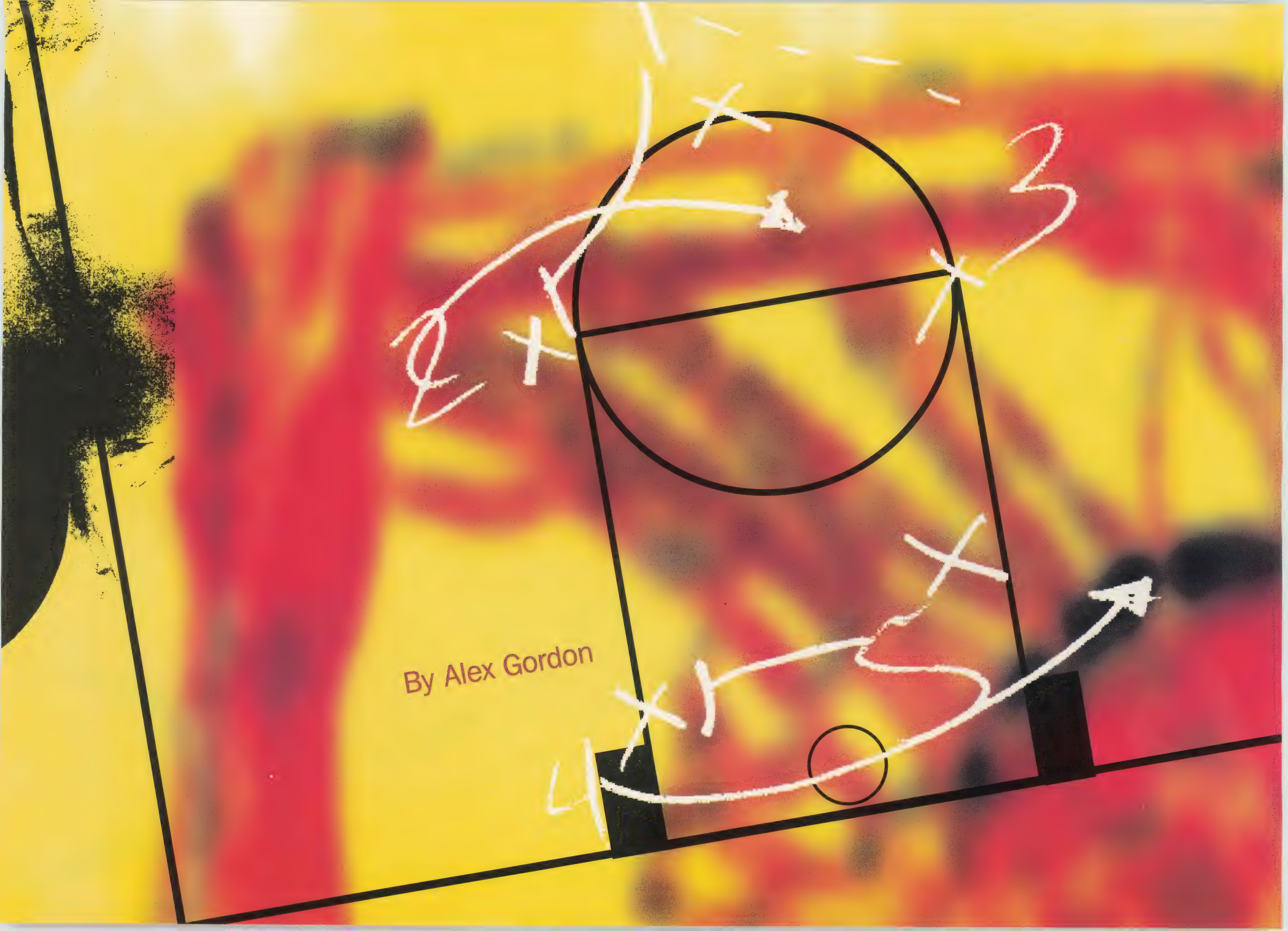
"People can play out their darker halves, do what they always wanted to their enemies," says Matson. "It's why we play cops and robbers, Barbie, anything. We want to experience a lifestyle we can't live. Besides, vampires could exist, the way I think unicorns could exist. Maybe not in the purely physical hard-proof way we like to think of everyday reality. I kind of hope so."

> katflinn: What do you want people to know about you or about your kind?

AcE: We are not all that glamorous, and we are just as varied as yourselves...we did not choose to become what we are...for what kind of a choice is that to make? Everlasting life...or death..." o

An independent site built by two roundball fanatics goes hard to the rack and jams with authority over commercial competition




By Alex Gordon

WHEN THE NBA, WITH THE HELP OF STARWAVE, LAUNCHED ITS MASSIVE COMMERCIAL site last fall, the general reaction was pure adulation. The arbiters of cool on the Web tripped over each other to praise the league's official collection of news and stats in NBA.com. In the spirit of full disclosure, I should note even *IU* included the site in its vaunted Top 10.

The icons on these pages were designed by On Hoops co-creator Christopher Cote for the "Police Blotter" section of his site.

But basketball fanatic Christopher Cote greeted the arrival of an official NBA site with a much different reaction: "It blows, it sucks...it was such a letdown. I was so bummed, it was so weak."

"IF A GUY PLAYS LIKE A DOG, WE CALL HIM A DOG"

—"Chuck" Cote

You'll have to excuse him for being somewhat biased. Cote is the co-creator of the site On Hoops at http:// www.onhoops. com/, best described as the evil twin of NBA.com.

Where the NBA site highlights superstars in a straightforward, if somewhat sterile style, On Hoops offers "Police Blotter," chronicling the missteps of NBA rank-and-file, replete with icons of bongs, moonshine jugs and boxing gloves.

It's not that Cote and his partner Brock Andersen don't like the NBA. You need only wander their site to find out what big fans they are of the sport. On Hoops features in-depth game analysis, detailed examinations of trades and signings and explorations of team trends. Cote and Andersen, both 23, leave the mundane daily reporting to the professionals.

"At NBA.com, there's not much there," says Andersen, "I'd rather read the box scores in the paper and I've already seen all the great plays on ESPN" by the time they are on the Web.

Only two basketball fanatics such as Cote and Andersen could engineer a site that examines all facets of the game, sometimes taking the time to talk about forgotten arts of passing and shooting in these days when the dunk reigns supreme. They are quick to praise those who are worthy, but it's open season on the NBA's crybabies, malcontents and prima donnas.

"The popularity of our site?" Cote ponders, "There's no crap to it. If a guy plays like a dog we call him a dog. I'm a fan of the game more than individual teams. Hitting the open man, running a good break. That's what I love seeing."

The pair refer to themselves on the site as Los Chucks, derived from a slang term for their style of play. Los Chucks work by day at Vidya Media Ventures, a contract Web publisher they founded along with four other college friends. The pair started On Hoops when it became clear their co-workers were sick of hearing the two always talking about basketball. The two were screwing around with the computer one night and On Hoops was born.

At first, Cote says, they were lucky to get 100 hits a month, but you can't hide good content on the Web. Cote says now On Hoops averages 120,000 hits a week, a remarkable number for a non-commercial site. Success has its benefits; at press time, Los Chucks were in the midst of negotiating with a couple of commercial online services to become content providers. They've also put out the word via their site that they are open to sponsorship.

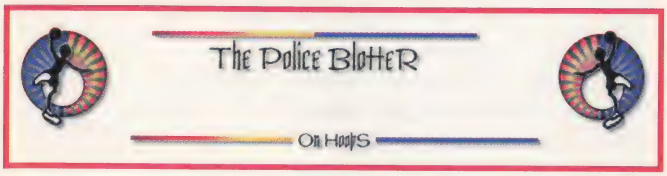
The ideas for their site just come to them impulsively. Police Blotter was started when Cote was in bed reading about the Cleveland Cavaliers' Tyrone Hill and the Sacramento Kings' Brian Grant altercation with some Cincinnatians.

With Andersen still finishing up school at the University of California at San Diego while working and Cote pulling in 13-hour days, neither has much of a chance to do recreational Web browsing. Cote says maintaining the site takes about an hour a day, and he refuses to work on the weekends—unless there's a really big story.

In addition to sharing the writing and editing, Cote puts together all the graphics for the site, as well design for other Vidya clients. Andersen's 'net knowledge was limited before On Hoops started. "For me it just kind of started as a hobby," he says, "it was a way to learn the programming language."

Both Andersen and Cote say e-mail from readers pleases them most, especially those who have started to contribute articles to the site. Beyond offering stories, visitors help On Hoops expand by nominating players to two of the more popular areas: The Journeyman/Chump Roster highlighting the "Masters of the 10-day contract, league minimum plus meal money" and The Golden Chuck Awards where the awards range from the "The Bolted to the Floor Chuck" to "The Acie Earl Ugliest Skills Chuck."

Don't look for Los Chucks to diversify any time soon. "We don't like football very much," Cote says, "and baseball puts me to sleep by the second inning."



FAST BREAKS

At their On Hoops site, Los Chucks dish out basketball commentary with an attitude. If you're used to vanilla commentary from network suits, their style may shock you, but you can't fault them for being honest. Below are some examples of their NBA analysis:

Introduction to the "Journeyman/Chump Roster"

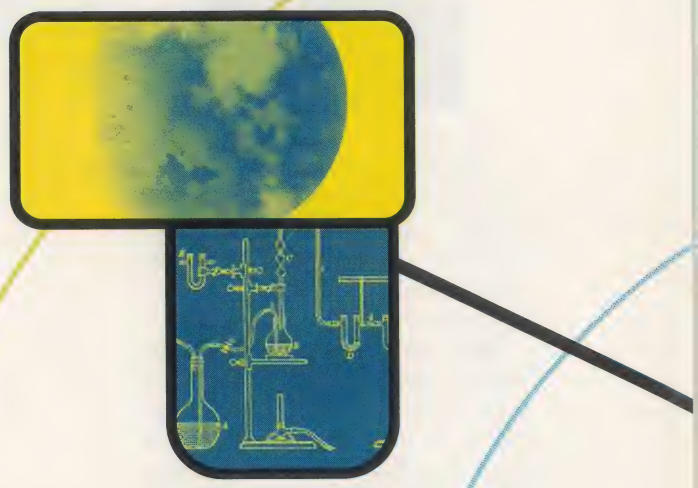
You know 'em, you love 'em, but you can't understand how they manage to hang around the league so long. They are the Salvatorre Bellomos, the Special Delivery Joneses of the NBA. Masters of the 10-day contract, league minimum plus meal money. If there are too many of these guys on the court, you'll know its garbage time. If there's too many of these guys on your favorite team's roster you'll know the injury bug has officially hit, or maybe your fave squad is just lousy. Some of these guys haven't bounced around that much, but you know they will.

From "The Police Blotter"

8-29-95 Burnin' Vernon now takes on a new meaning. Our man Vern, still famous for clobbering a fan in Portland and admittedly faking leg injuries in some odd sort of protest of Clyde Drexler, got nailed for running a red light in Clutch City. The police ran his plates and found two outstanding traffic warrants on his record. So, the cops searched the car and, whoa, hey, Vernon was burnin' some ganj, some weed, some herb, some smoky-smoky, some Mary Jane, some wacky tabaccy. In other words, the cops found a bag of marijuana. Chances are Vern was expanding his mind in an attempt to figure out how his career got so untracked. He paid a grand in bail, or roughly what he makes in two minutes of playing time. He also faces a court date September 5. Robert Parish was not available for comment.

From "Acquisitions"

12-12-95 The John Lucas Experiment signs Scott Skiles and the Bear. Oh man, just when we thought the Sixers had hit rock bottom, Father John comes through with a pair of big-time signings. Right. Scott Skiles is not the answer at point and apparently, neither is Trevor Ruffin. Skiles plays a very boring, very unimaginative style of hoops. Oatmeal ball. What fun is it to watch a guy who appears to hop around in severe stomach pain, doubled over the ball, waiting to get to the bombline to make a pass to another guy four feet away? No fun, that's what. Guaranteed he goes down for at least three weeks on three separate occasions. Mike Brown will not add too much to this team except in meal money demands. He's big, that's undeniable but no game. None. Actually, there is an upside to this. In order to make room, the Sixers waived Greg Grant and placed Scott Williams on the IR, so we won't have to see his crybaby ass for a couple more weeks anyway.



At first glance, Index Librorum Liberorum seems nondescript, even bland. Those accustomed to fancy graphics may spurl the site almost immediately, eschewing its more discreet charms for an attention-grabbing bitmap bonanza available elsewhere. After all, this is essentially just an FTP site, and the atmosphere of the Web has taught us that subtlety may reward eventually, but eventually sure takes a long time at 14.4 baud.

So the impatient user moves on and makes a terrible mistake.

Index Librorum Liberorum is easily one of the most extraordinary sites on the Web. It's like creaking open a flimsy door of balsa wood and stepping into a cavern of gold, discovering toys and tools and tomes that make you realize that perhaps the Web might not be entirely frivolous after all. The Index singlehandedly makes the Web seem worthy of the hype, worthy of the hope that this accidental grid latched onto by a few million people may revolutionize education and communication. Or, at the very least, make it cheaper.

He Blinded Us With

Here's what you can do at the Index: speed up your computer's memory, discover relativity, download a program to hack links, read science-fiction short stories, see the Earth from any angle, read the whole Bible (Old and New Testaments), improve your French, find out where forgotten land mines are hidden, display an icon with the current phase of the moon, set your system time to an atomic clock, view the Solar System on any date from 4713 B.C. to 8000 A.D., encode text into gibberish, then create an entire planet. You can also download a whole lot of programs that I don't understand, such as Dumb Interpretively Executed String Expression Language in portable C, "a kernel of a tiny string language you can embed in applications which need limited macro facilities." I have no idea what that means exactly, but I'm sure it doesn't take up as much room as the entire U.S. Tax Code, which the Index also offers. The sheer amount of text at the site would put even Stephen King to shame. Yet, it's all done by one person.

The man responsible is John Walker, the founder and former president of the design-automation software company Autodesk. Now living in Switzerland, Walker is one of those computer figures who seems to have been around at every major computer innovation in the last 30 years, sometimes on the winning end and sometimes not. After starting a hardware company in 1977, which he says "nobody's ever heard of because we chose the wrong chip," Walker founded Autodesk five years later, one of the first companies to concentrate only on software. Though he always considered himself more of a programmer than an executive, Walker nonetheless led the company through a period of enormous growth, serving as president until 1986 and chairman until 1988. Although he stayed on in various capacities until 1994, Walker always preferred creating new products to the intricacies of corporate management. In 1988, the company's presidency went to a man with more of a financial background, Al Green, who led the company into a long-term prosperity, still con-

g
W
K - dielectric constant
λ - wavelength (inches)
c - specific heat of work
Science!
by Justin Ware
t - heating time (minutes)
It's Not Flashy, But the Index Librorum Liberorum Delivers
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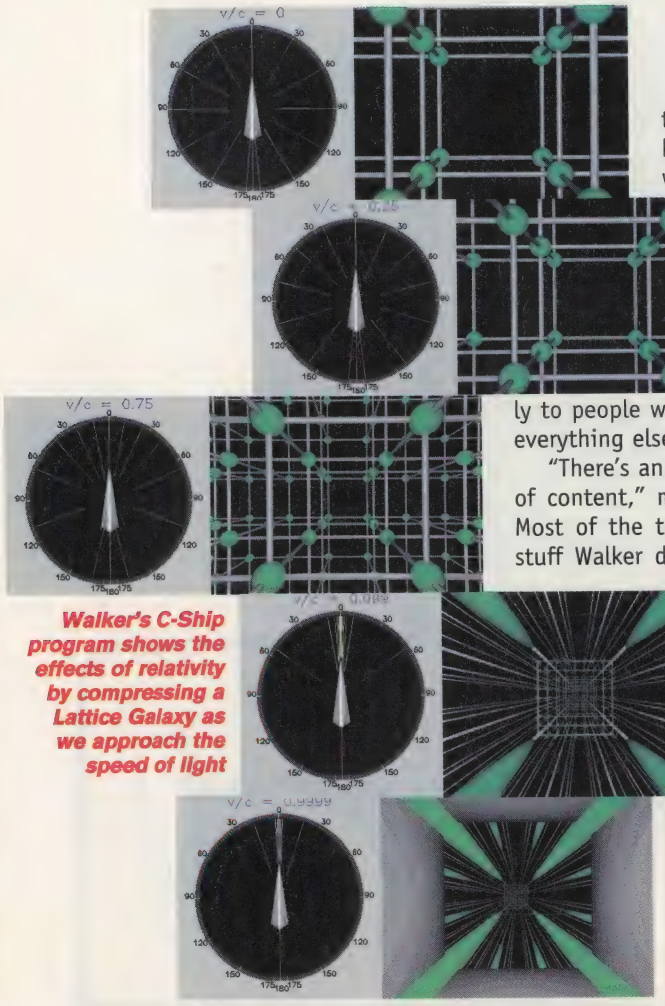
(fig. 7)



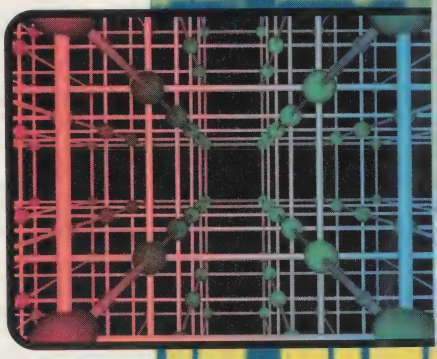
Walker's C-Ship program shows the effects of relativity by compressing a Lattice Galaxy as we approach the speed of light

tinuing today—Autodesk's 1994 net revenue hit $455 million. The story of Autodesk is well documented, however, so let's get back to the Web site. Actually, even on the Web site, you can't escape the history of Autodesk. Walker uploaded about 900 pages of press releases, internal memos and analysis combined into one enormous etext. This may be of interest mainly to people wanting to start a software company, but like everything else on the Index, Walker doesn't skimp.

"There's an awful lot of gloss on the Web, and not a lot of content," muses Walker, who started his site in 1994. Most of the tools he offers began as potential products, stuff Walker dreamed up or "hacked together" during his years at Autodesk; after he left the company in 1994, most of the rights to the unused products went back to him. So, with a newfound forum for delivery, he immediately made it available via FTP, expecting a few curious programmers to stop by and not much more. "I will tell you, I didn't expect 20,000 people a day," says Walker. "I thought it would be this little corner of the Web with interesting software components and interactive science tools."

Of course, to anyone who swings by the site, it becomes clear almost immediately that these are not your everyday fun hacks, but complex learning tools. Or complex software. Or complex books. Just about every piece seems like a difficult endeavor—just the sheer volume is staggering. Every time you duck into something you think might be a minor hobby, like the problem of land mines scattered across former war zones, you discover that he's leading up an initiative to develop low-cost, lightweight robots to clear them out. Not only that, but you can also look at pictures and definitions of various common mines to avoid blowing your leg off while sauntering through Poland.

Most of Walker's efforts as of late, however, have been concentrated on Speak Freely, a program designed to allow users to speak over the Internet. Walker was a premature pioneer in this area; after he moved to Switzerland in 1991, he created a remedial voice program to listen to meetings in L.A. over Autodesk's network. The Internet, however, poses a new set of challenges. Though a few commercial companies have been trying to do the same thing (most notably IPhone and Digiphone), Walker



JOHN WALKER MAY BE ONE OF THE PEOPLE IN THIS PICTURE–WE JUST CAN'T FIGURE OUT WHICH ONE.

Why are there no photos of John Walker with this article? Initially, Walker's response to a photo request was simple: "No, I'm sorry—no picture is available." As I read through the materials on the site, however, the answer became much more complex. Pictures of Walker are far from common, and they're even more scarce since he left Autodesk. This may have something to do with the number of negative experiences Walker has had with interviews (on his site, he characterizes print as "the most dangerous of media"), including a *Wall Street Journal* slash-and-burn profile written in questionable fashion by G. Pascal Gregory. Of course, one of the advantages of the Web is that you can always tell your side—Walker, who taped the interview, has uploaded the entire transcript, which you can compare to the article as it appeared.

wants to create a free product with cellular phone quality and complete security. Not a small task, certainly, and one that has filled Walker with frustration—the last couple of months have been swallowed up trying to debug the program's reactions to operating systems, especially Windows 95.

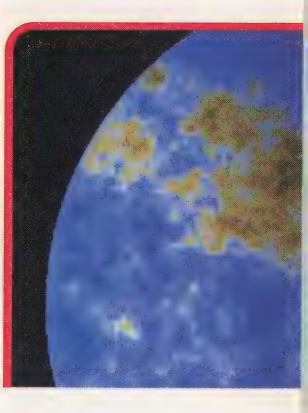
"After 25 years of writing software, you'd think, as Dennis the Menace would say, 'I'd be able to see how big the puddle is from looking at it from the top,' " says Walker. "But if you want to do sound over the Internet, you have to be able to talk to the network and to the soundboards and sending sound over the Internet really pushes it. These are things the vendors don't necessarily test." Then again, writing software for the Internet also has its advantages; unlike programs for other platforms, Walker cannot only respond quickly to problems, he can even pinpoint them as they occur.

"One of the things I've found is that in all my previous years of writing software, I had no sense of how people actually found their way through it. On the Web, I can watch people go into blind alleys, and I can fix it. I have direct contact with the user—I can watch them second by second, then tune things to help the user figure out what's going on. Someone might get stuck, but all they need is a back button—on Windows, without the feedback, it could have been a year before I discovered that."

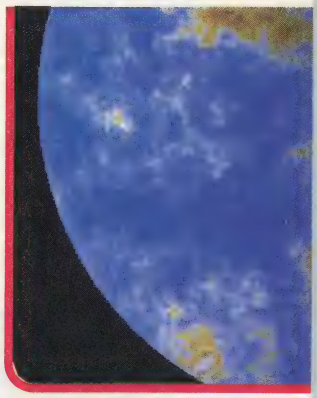
"It's like being present at the creation of the Universe."
– John Walker on the birth of the Web

Of course, one only needs to talk to Walker for so long before realizing that he doesn't have to be doing this at all. Does one upload the original 1865 version of Jules Verne's *De la Terre à la Lune*, annotated and in French, out of sheer boredom? Obviously not. Walker may be prolific, but he's not writing a screen saver simulating the cratering of planets just for the hell of it. Is it actually possible, on a Web increasingly full of money-grubbing fluff, that he's actually just trying to create something useful? Or is he getting some kind of reward?

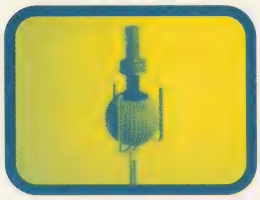
Walker's reaction to the query was somewhat brusque. "I already started one company. I'm not going to make this commercial." The profit motive is clearly out. "I hate to phrase it this way, because of all the baggage that comes with it, but I look at the Web as a way to explore and get a sense for science without having to buy a program that works on only one platform," explains Walker. "If I want to make a program that lets you view comets, anybody on Earth who has Web access can get it immediately." After spending years rewriting programs for Microsoft, Apple, Unix, and even Amiga, Walker welcomes the Web as a way to deliver content in a machine-independent way.



So that explains why the Web is his forum, but not why he's doing this in the first place. That answer is couched a little more carefully, since Walker obviously doesn't want to sound like some kind of multimedia Santa Claus giving out gifts to all of the little kids that happen to log onto his toy store. But the fact of the matter is, he's giving away some rather nifty tools for learning; I studied Astronomy for a year and a half, and C-Ship gave me a better idea of relativity than textbooks that cost $70.



Walker sees the Web as holding enormous untapped potential for broadening minds. Despite the popular perception, there's a lot of resources on the 'net that are valuable, and Walker hopes his site will be only one of many to explore scientific issues. Most of his e-mail (around 75 messages a day) is encouraging; although he does receive a lot of notes asking technical questions, much of his mail also expresses support for what most people realize is an enormous undertaking. "I'm in contact with a number of people who have labor-of-love content-rich sites, and we're all seeing a growing number of accesses," says Walker. "I want to create the kind of tools a K-12 teacher can point kids to, and that's what a lot of



A VIETNAMESE ANTI-PERSONNEL MINE, ONE OF THE TYPES WALKER HOPES ROBOTS (BELOW) CAN ERADICATE.

us out here are trying to do—show the real value of the Web."

Walker certainly has given himself a substantial challenge. Other than the basic difficulties of programming, creating simulations, and keeping old programs up to date, he has to deal with the challenges posed by the increasing popularity of his site. "It's a love-hate relationship," explains Walker. "These waves of people access your site, and then complain about slowness." Being based in Switzerland doesn't help this any—the cost of telecommunications equipment, including lines and servers, costs about 90 times more in Switzerland than in the United States.

Still, Walker remains optimistic about the potential of the Internet and his role in it. When asked what his plans were after finishing up Speak Freely, he expressed a desire to finish C-Ship, then play more with his hacklinks program allowing users to link other people's sites back to them (with their permission, of course). After that? Walker exhales and pauses. "I don't know. It's like being present at the creation of the Universe. There's a billion things to do. We have an unlimited number of opportunities."

If anyone will take advantage of these opportunities, however, it's John Walker. Having earned the freedom to experiment and push the envelope of Internet programming, Walker can now test the Web's capacities as a scientific playground and educational laboratory. Walker has somehow managed to retain a sense of wonder about the Web's capacities; having never lost his sense of scale, he is able to appreciate what can be done with such a powerful tool. "The first thing you lose on the Internet is your sense of the absurd," explains Walker. "The first 2400 baud modem I saw I couldn't lift, and now someone from anywhere in the world can download a program from my site in Switzerland almost immediately. The fact that everybody on Earth can be instantaneously connected takes a while to sink in, and it's going to take all of us to figure it out."

FROM HERE TO ALPHA CENTAURI

In order to give readers a small taste of Walker's writings, IU *decided to excerpt his well-developed views on humanity's place in the universe. Sound a little heavy? Read for yourself—his angle may be firm and bombastic, but at least it's optimistic. Of course, this is all in the long term, and by that we mean the really long term—don't book your reservations for Sirius quite yet.*

"Is it reasonable to expect that life will cease to expand at the very moment it becomes capable of spreading further, outward, onward? That after billions of years and countless quadrillions of organisms, life will remain huddled on one small planet, awaiting the day when the Sun dies and ends it all? No. Already we have taken our first steps outward. Once the expansion begins in earnest, it will spread exponentially. It took 3 billion years of evolution before life managed to assemble individual cells into complex creatures, then only a quarter as long to evolve beings capable of carrying life to other worlds.

Using only technologies we currently possess, and traveling no faster than the Voyager probes already bound starward, we could begin to explore the galaxy. Even at so slow a speed—requiring between 10 and a hundred thousand years to travel between stars, if each new outpost launched its own emissaries of life onward, life would spread everywhere in the galaxy in only 300 million years—less than half the time it took the first multicellular creatures to evolve into beings audacious enough to think such thoughts. Using technologies likely to be developed in the next century, founded on scientific knowledge already in hand, life could populate the galaxy in just 4 million years—comparable to the time it took the first hominids to radiate from the Home Continent to the farthest corners of the Home Planet."

Take our Happy Fun Survey!

(And possibly win a copy of the Eudora Pro e-mail program)

This is a survey about you, the *Internet Underground*™ reader. Please take a moment to answer the following questions and return the completed survey to us at the address below. Or, avoid snail mail and visit us at http://www.nuke.com/underground.html and fill out the survey online. All completed surveys returned by March 1, 1996 will automatically be entered into a random drawing for a free prize: A copy of Qualcomm's Eudora Pro e-mail program, a favorite of the *IU* editorial staff.

1. Which of the following do you consider yourself?
a. Avid Internet Junkie
b. Casual Internet User
c. New Internet User

2. Where do you have online access?
a. Home only
b. Work/school only
c. Both home and work/school

2a. How do you access the Internet?
a. Direct Internet Access
b. Internet Provider
c. Online Service

2b. If you subscribe to an online service, which service do you subscribe to? (Mark all that apply)
a. America Online
b. CompuServe
c. Delphi
d. GEnie
e. Imagination
f. MCI Mail
g. MSN
h. Prodigy
i. EWorld
j. The Sierra Network

2c. What Web browser do you use? (Mark all that apply)
a. AOL
b. GNN
c. Netscape
d. Mosaic
e. MSN browser
f. Other (please specify)

3. How long have you been accessing online/Internet services?
a. More than one year
b. One year to six months
c. Three to six months
d. One to three months

4. How do you spend your time online? (Mark all that apply)
a. Entertainment
b. Playing games
c. Chatting with other users
d. Just cruising
e. Reading the news
f. Research
g. Business
h. E-mail
i. Other

5. How often do you go online?
a. Everyday
b. Two to three times per week
c. Once a week
d. Two to three times per month
e. Once a month
f. Less than once a month

6. On the average, how much time do you spend online at a sitting?
a. Less than 15 minutes
b. 15 to 29 minutes
c. 30 to 44 minutes
d. 45 to 59 minutes
e. One hour to under two hours
f. Two hours to under three hours
g. Three hours or more

7. Do you, or have you ever, done Web programming from home or work?
a. Home b. Work c. Never

8. What type of computer do you:

	Own	Plan to Buy
a. Amiga	____	____
b. Apple	____	____
c. Atari	____	____
d. Commodore	____	____
e. IBM/Compatible	____	____
f. Macintosh	____	____
g. Tandy (non-IBM)	____	____
h. Unix/NeXt	____	____

8a. If you use an IBM/IBM compatible, what speed do you:

	Own	Plan to Buy
a. 33 MHZ	____	____
b. 66 MHZ	____	____
c. 90 MHZ	____	____
d. 120 MHZ	____	____
e. 133 MHZ	____	____
f. other	____	____

8b. What speed modem do you :

	Own	Plan to Buy
speed	____	____

8c. What speed CD-ROM drive do you own or plan to buy?

	Own	Plan to Buy
speed	____	____

9. Do you play PC games?
a. Yes b. No

10. What is your age?
a. 18-21years old
b. 22-29 years old
c. 30-40 years old
d. Over 40 years old

19. What is your gender?
a. Male
b. Female

20. How are you employed?
a. Full-time
b. Part-time
c. Student
d. Not employed

21. What is your annual income?
a. Under $20,000
b. $20,000 to $29,999
c. $30,000 to $39,999
d. $40,000 to $49,999
e. $50,000 to 59,999
f. $60,000 to 74,999
g. $75,000 to 99,999
h. Over $100,000

22. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
a. Attended high school
b. Graduated from high school
c. Attended college/In college now
d. Bachelor's degree
e. Postgraduate study
f. Master's degree
g. Doctorate

Name _____

Address _____

City, State Zip _____

e-mail address _____

Please send your completed survey to:

Internet Underground Reader Survey
1920 Highland Ave, 2nd Floor
Lombard, IL 60148

Contest Rules:
1. No Purchase Necessary: To enter, complete and mail the reader survey (or write to obtain a survey and include a self address stamped envelope containing your name, address, and phone number) to "Internet Underground Reader Survey," Internet Underground, 1920 Highland Avenue, 2nd Floor, Lombard, Illinois 60148. No purchase or payment is necessary to enter. One entry per household. All entries must be handwritten. Mechanically reproduced entries will not be accepted. Entries must be received by March 1, 1996. All entries become exclusive property of Sendai Publishing Group, Inc., and will not be acknowledged or returned. Sendai Publishing Group, Inc., assumes no responsibility for lost, mutilated, late, illegible, incomplete, postage-due or misdirected entries. Only one prize per family, organization, or household.
2. Prizes: 1 Grand Prize: Grand Prize winner will receive one (1) Eudora Pro software package. Grand Prize has an approximate retail value of $90. Winners will be determined by a random drawing from all valid entries by Sendai Publishing Group, Inc. whose decisions are final. Drawing to be held on or about March 15, 1996. All prize(s) will be awarded. Prize winner will be notified by mail. Prize(s) are non-transferable. No substitutions of prize(s) are allowed, except at the option of Sendai Publishing Group, Inc. should the featured prize(s) become unavailable.
3. Odds of Winning: The odds of winning will be determined by number of valid entries received.
4. Eligibility: Sweepstakes open to residents of United States and Canada only. Void in Quebec. Non-compliance with the time parameters contained herein or return of any prize/prize notification as undeliverable will result in disqualification and an alternate winner will be selected. Winners or their legal guardians shall sign an affidavit of eligibility/release of liability/prize acceptance within 30 days of receipt or forfeit prize. By acceptance of prize, winner(s) agrees to the use of their name and/or likeness for purposes of advertising, trade, or promotion without further compensation, unless prohibited by law. Employees of Sendai Publishing Group, Inc. and its respective affiliates are not eligible. Neither Sendai Publishing Group, Inc. nor its affiliates, subsidiaries, divisions, or related companies are responsible for any damages, taxes, or expenses that consumers might incur as a result of this contest or receipt of prize. Winner accepting prize(s) agree that all prize(s) are awarded on the condition that Sendai Publishing Group, Inc., and its agents, representatives, and employees will have no liability whatsoever for any injuries, losses, or damages of any kind resulting from acceptance, possession, or use of the prize(s). Winner further acknowledges that Sendai Publishing Group, Inc. has neither made nor are in any manner responsible or liable for any warranty, representation, or guarantee express or implied, in fact or in law, relative to any prize, including but not limited to its quality, mechanical condition or fitness.
5. Winners List: For a list of winners, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Internet Underground Reader Survey Contest Winners, 1920 Highland Ave. 2nd Floor, Lombard, IL 60148. Requests for winners lists must be received by May 1, 1996. Allow 4 weeks for delivery of winners list.
6. Restrictions: Void where prohibited or restricted by law. All federal, state and local regulations apply.
7. Sponsors: This contest is solely sponsored by Sendai Publishing Group, Inc.

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GUERRILLA GUIDE TO HIGH-TECH TRADE SHOWS

BY MICHAEL RONEY AND MICHAEL UTVICH

RANDOM HOUSE

$12.95

★★★½

Billed as the underground resource for saving your time, money and sanity, we had to check it out. After all, we had to do the hand-clasping, meatball-munching circuit last fall when the magazine launched. Essentially, this book acts as a cross between a sarcastic look at the major computer trade shows and travel guidebook. Some of the humor seems rather sophomoric, such as their pages of comments about what kind of conversation you can expect depending on the kind of food served at an after-hours party, for example, was neither useful nor that funny.

However, they offer excellent suggestions that the more resourceful among us may have already figured out. Among the most useful suggestions was that even a Joe Lunchbox who publishes a newsletter might be able to get a press pass, something that this editor (fat from free press room lunches) heartily recommends.

They also take a comparative look at trade show "gimmes," from T-shirts to free disks, rating their worth on a Post-Show Gimme Worth Index with useful tips on converting them into something useful. (Keyrings: "Using a power drill, you can create standard-sized holes in plastic to create similated pre-Colombian jewelry, wind-chimes or folk-artish musical instruments. or inventive, but tacky, faux nunchaku-derivative martial-arts gear.")

Their guide to cities and hotels was also worth skimming, although it's so sparse and its choices so expensive that it's really only of value if you've got only a couple of hours and an expense account.

If you pack up often to hit computer shows, this book is worth packing for on-plane reading, too. -Kathleen Flinn

CIVILIZING CYBERSPACE

BY STEVEN MILLER

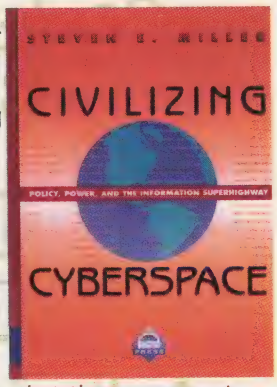
ADDISON WESLEY

$24.95

★★★

By now, we've all seen Vice President Al Gore talk about the information superhighway with a gleam in his Tennessee eyes. Steven E. Miller's new book, *Civilizing Cyberspace*, attempts to explain what the superhighway is and why it might not be the most wonderful thing since the invention of canned soup. Known officially as the National Information Infrastructure, the superhighway poses many problems with access, privacy and fairness that that optimists fail to mention. Miller shows us the problems with creating what would essentially be a more sophisticated Internet, with the capacity to connect everyone in the world to information and entertainment in an instant.

There are many interesting facts in the book. For instance, Miller explains the origins of the Internet. The 'net's original purpose was to gain a strategic advantage in case of nuclear war. The author also gives a historical perspective to the Internet, showing how the nation's railroad system can stand as a model for building this new infrastructure. Miller also presents the dangers of the megacorporations controlling the content of the National Information Infrastructure like they do on broadcast and cable television. Miller does a solid job of revealing the dark underbelly of what some would think is an impending cyberheaven, revealing that the government may not want the superhighway to become a new forum for democracy but just another shopping mall.



The book is not a happy romp through pretty meadows. Sometimes facts and figures are repeated endlessly, Miller's points driven into the reader's head like a diamond-tipped drill bit. It is as dry as a college textbook you were forced to read. However, if you want to know everything about the information revolution but are afraid to ask, this is the book to read. —Rob Kozlowski

VIRTUAL TAROT

VIRTUAL MEDIA WORKS

$39.95

★½

As if having a CD-ROM read your cards wasn't enough, Virtual Tarot, a new product from Virtual Media Works comes packaged with an offer for five free Internet astrology readings. It's a shame you couldn't use the readings to tell you whether or not to buy the product.

Products like this make you want to cry. Bad implementation here hideously damages a really original idea, and now it becomes that much harder for anyone else to do a new thing in the same vein. Virtual Tarot could single-handedly cripple meditation/divination CD-ROMs for years to come.

The idea for a tarot CD-ROM is a natural. Tarot reading generally engenders very little dispute compared to other clairvoyant techniques. Since it encompasses basic human archetypes recognized by fields as diverse as dramatics to psychology, even skeptics can interpret the tarot as a good tool for mediating and trying to find new combinations in a problem: no fortune-telling or supernatural ability required.

Virtual Tarot provides a great service in giving a visual and auditory database of the dozens of different card interpretations that stop the average person from working effectively with the tarot. The program also automatically performs layouts, allowing the user to concentrate on just the cards and their relationships without having to mess with books to play with this interesting tool.

But the good points are destroyed by an inept implementation. First it covers the need to install Quicktime, but doesn't bother to check for more up-to-date versions already installed: three lines of code for a competent programmer.

Next, in minimum install, the program can't find some files and demands users find them every time the program runs. The list of blunders is almost endless.

Without some serious attention to detail in other products, the future of Virtual Media Works is clearly in the cards—the Hermit, ill-dignified to be specific: isolation, draining, failure.

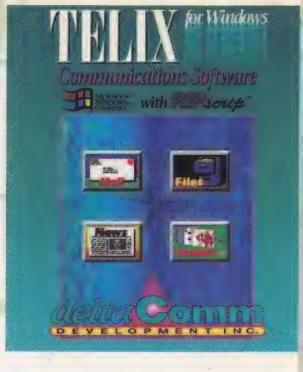
—John P. Withers

TELIX FOR WINDOWS

BY DELTACOMM DEVELOPMENT, INC

$99.00

★★★★½



Chances are, the communications software that was bundled with your computer was bewildering from start to finish. A barren expanse of white screen, a few lines of text and a great many inscrutable acronyms and protocols made up the interface. This may have scared you off of communication. programs, but the newly updated Telix for Windows should warm you right back up to them with its friendly graphical interface and useful features.

Right off the bat, Telix caters to the plug-and-play mentality by not requiring you to configure the modem and port settings. It already knows the optimal settings for more than 500 brands and models of modems; you simply click to indicate your setup and Telix does the rest. Telix's graphical interface is a cinch to use, with obvious buttons and simple commands. Telix supports RIPScrip graphics, so your next visit to the local bulletin board system will be totally graphically enhanced.

The program allows for easy editing of multiple phone books. You can dial your favorite service with one click, and even program Telix to do simple sequences such as entering your password and checking your mail. Telix can also help with your bills related to getting online. It will keep track of how much time you've spent that month on each service you call, and also calculate the charges you've racked up by calling different locations with different rates. One area of clear improvement over often-mystifying terminal programs is a good mechanism for capturing logs of sessions, both in a text file and onto a printer. With Telix, you will have a clear record of what transpired on-screen. The controller for this looks just like a tape deck, and even features a "pause" function.

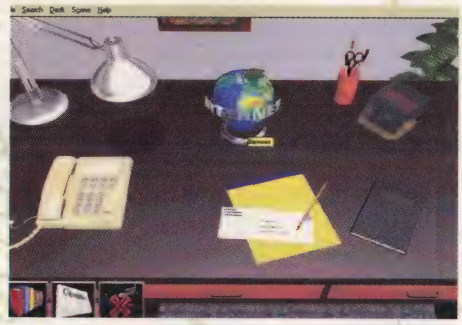
Finally, the sweetest thing about Telix for Windows was its well-executed help files. They have hyperlinks and imagemaps, and were really written for the average ordinary guy. If you have any fear of a shell account, pick up a copy of Telix and cure that phobia in one afternoon. —Sarah Ellerman

INTERGO

TEACHERSOFT

FREE TRIAL VERSION

★★★½



Admit it, sometimes there's stuff you read in this magazine that baffles you. Oh, you try to maintain the veneer of all-knowing cyberGod, but you really couldn't tell the difference between an FTP and DNS. Couldn't someone just make the 'net a little simpler?

InterGo has answered your prayers with a product designed primarily for kids and educators, but one that can also serve as a good introduction to the ways of the 'net for newbies.

The opening screen of the program is a desktop a la Microsoft's Bob. Just click on the spinning globe and you go to a Web browser. Click on the envelope and go to your mail server. See, it's simple, and I admit that there's something seducing about the easy-to-use interface. It's almost a guilty pleasure.

InterGo is divided into four screens or rooms. Beyond the office with the Internet tools, there's a library with books ranging from handy reference titles like an atlas and an Encyclopedia to classic literature like *The Red Badge of Courage.* Other areas include the Newsroom, with TV icons tuned to channels for sports, weather or blank for your own choices and the Treasure Map, with links to games and a space shuttle that launches you to random Web sites.

InterGo also has features for parents who want to make the Internet safe for their children without trampling all over the First Amendment.

For the purpose of this review we downloaded the beta version of the program at http://www. eachersoft.com:8o/ products/ betatril.htm, which did have some bugs, but it's definitely good enough to judge whether this product is right for your needs. InterGo is available in both Mac and Windows versions for $99.

—Harrison Carter

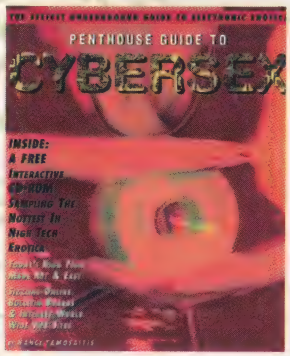
THE PENTHOUSE GUIDE TO CYBERSEX

BY NANCY TAMOSAITIS

PENTHOUSE INTERNATIONAL, LTD.

$29.98

★★



One thing you have to admire about *The Penthouse Guide to Cybersex* is that it's one of the most attractive catalogues ever published. Instead of really creating a book, the folks from *Penthouse* have compiled a wealth of resources one can use to engage in cybersex and thrown them into one attractive package with ordering information. A major selling point, one would imagine, is the bonus CD-ROM that comes with the books, but the CD-ROM has about as much substance as a compendium of motel room soft-porn previews. Instead of actually letting the user experience anything, the CD-ROM just warms them up and then gives them a number to call, which, knowing the audience for this book, probably works as a marketing ploy. The book itself has marginally more substance; it covers BBSs and CD-ROMs with a decent amount of depth, but it kind of falls apart when it gets to the Web (an almost impossible thing to cover in a static medium). From there it pretty much degrades into naughty transcripts when it gets around to discussing online chat. To its credit, however, *The Penthouse Guide to Cybersex* does acknowledge one of the more sordid realities of chat: the constancy of deception. After a story about an online digital dream named Donna, the book asks, "Is Donna truly a beautiful blonde cruising for potential dates on the Net? Could be. Probably not." If only the rest of the book were packaged with such candor.

—Justin Ware

Hey look Cyber Phreak, a book for us!

You can't help but like a book subtitled "Mischievous Fun for Higher Primates." *The Happy Mutant Handbook,* created by editors from *Wired, bOING, bOING* and a virtual who's who's of cyberjournalists, is essentially a humorous guide to today's off-kilter culture, which not surprisingly includes a great deal of Internet references. If you're unsure if you're a "happy" mutant, there's a handy guide early on in the book so you don't waste your $15. For example, the happy mutant "uses computer tech for fun and empowerment" and is "looking forward to next cool book, tech, idea, 'net site, goofy trend du jour," while the unhappy mutant "downloads tasteless skin disease GIF files" and is "looking forward to dying in fiery crash or post-office massacre." Chapters cover a wide spectrum of ideas and fetishes from the 'net to zines to Sea Monkeys—odds are this is the only book in your local library that gives equal time to the Slim Whitman Appreciation Society of the United States and the Church of Sub-Genius.

THE HAPPY MUTANT HANDBOOK

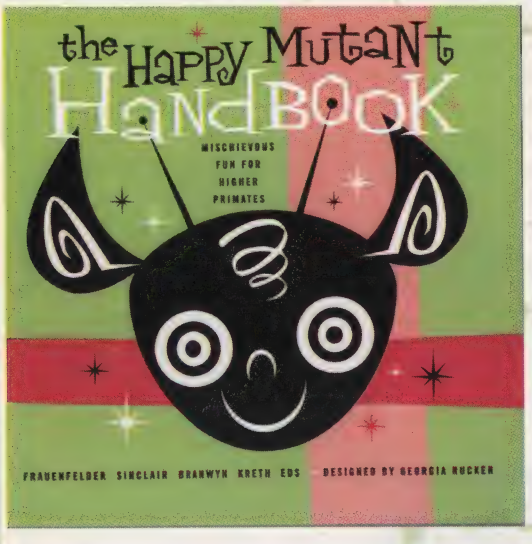
BY MARK FRAUENFELDER

RIVERHEAD BOOKS

$15

★★★★★

An entire section, titled "Better Living Through Silicon" features such terrific nuggets as the Net.Bozo Field Guide by Gareth Branwyn that includes trading cards of netizens like the newbie, who "finds the America Online Tour Guide (at 400 pages) indispensable," or the crotch potato, "a gifted one-hand typist," and the techno hippie who "has an endless source of new login names thanks to Dead lyrics." Net.Weirdness compiles a bunch of classicly weird newsgroups, FTP sites, mailing lists, but not a single Web site for a retro feel in a field where retro is what was "in" last month. If you're already a happy mutant, this book will bring countless joy. If you're an unhappy mutant, get this book and become one.—AG

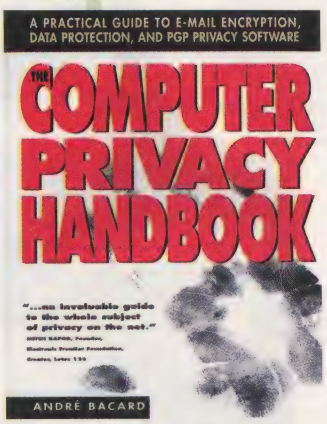


THE COMPUTER PRIVACY HANDBOOK

BY ANDRE BACARD

$24.95

★★★½



If you've read any part of our cover-story package, you already know about the importance of remailers, PGP (Pretty Good Privacy) and how computers help snoops.

The information in Bacard's book is stated in a forthright fashion with a good overview on the whole problem of privacy, the issues surrounding it and technology popping up to ensure it. However, a lot of the information has been reported in other places (including this issue of *IU*). If you just want to have a general overview of these areas, then reading over our cover package may save you the $24.95 you would otherwise have to shell out for the book. If you're deeply interested in the subject, this book is a good start and it offers some interesting insight into questionable government tactics to secure information on private individuals. -Arizona Clark

The latest in the seemingly endless line of books from Wolff and company, *Net Tech,* just like *Net Games, Net Trek* and all the rest, is a solidly researched reference book that does its best to keep up with an ever-changing medium. *Net Tech* purports to be "Your guide to the tech support, product news and software resources on the info highway." In an added feature to ensure the book doesn't become outdated the minute it hits the shelves, the publisher offers a Web site to visit for free updates (www.ypn.com). But hang on a second. The Web site is more than an update; it has the *entire contents* of the book online. And not just *Net Tech,* but all the books in the series. Why shell out the $19 when you can just go online and get the contents for free? I hate to rain on their parade, but it's loads easier to just hit the site, find the topic and use cut and paste or hyperlink. What were they thinking? It would seem as if this Web site, which is free, should at least require the use of a password from the book, or make you register or something. But no, it's there, available for book buyers and scammers alike.—AG

NET TECH

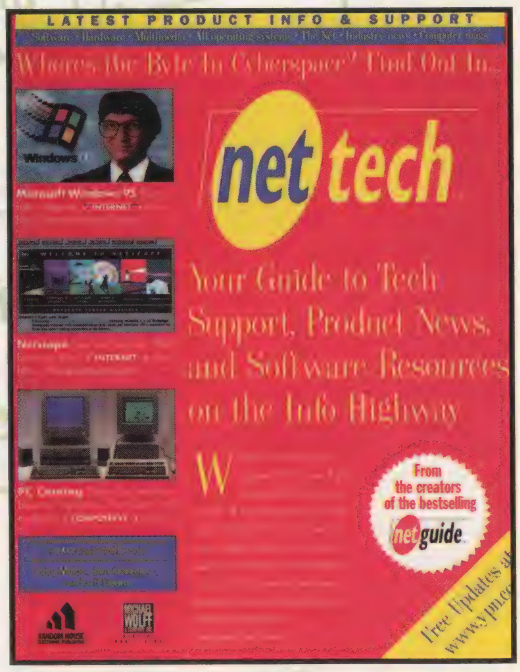
MICHAEL WOLFF, ET.AL.

RANDOM HOUSE

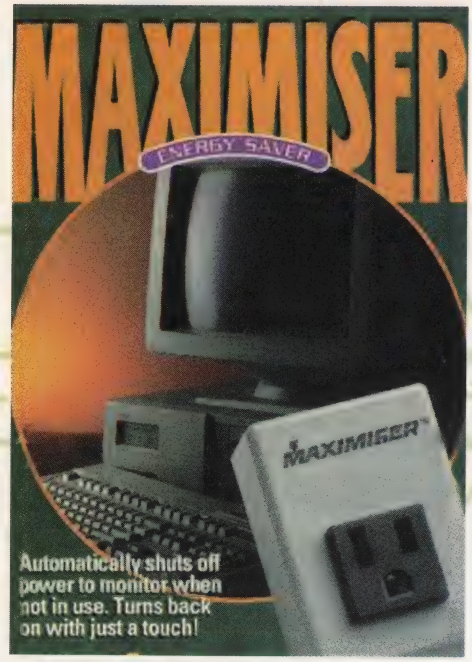
$19

★ FOR THE BOOK

★★★★ FOR THE WEB SITE



Now for the Net

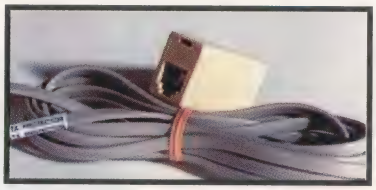


Maximiser

By Panamax

$34.95

Did you know that by leaving your computer monitor on while not in use you are helping to contribute to $10 million in energy waste a year? Even with a screen saver you're still burning fuel, and admit it—you're a little sick of seeing those toasters. Luckily, there's an easy solution: the Maximiser by Panamax. Simply plug your monitor into the device and then plug it into the wall, and every time your keyboard is idle for 15 minutes your screen will shut down. When you're ready to get back to work, hit a key and the screen's back on. Save your monitor and save the Earth. For more information call Panamax at 1-800-745-7730. For PCs only.



Flashy it's not, but if you've ever been cut off from the 'net while trying to download a 3-meg photo of Cindy Crawford because some chucklehead picked up the same phone line, you'll love the Data Protector from Dalco. Just place one of these on the line causing the interruptions, and the phone won't be able to access or interrupt a line that's already in use. Beyond the 'net, this device can even keep your roommate or loved one from eavesdropping on your conversations. For more information call 715-749-0160. For Mac or PC.

Data Protector

By Dalco Products

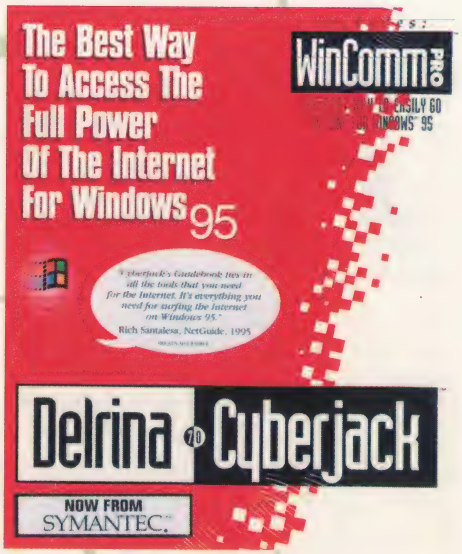
$16.95

QuickCam

by Connectix

$149

All you need to make movies or take pictures with your camputer is Connectix's QuickCam. While the quality may not equal *Citizen Kane*, you still get 15 frames per second, three more fps than the typical episode of *Scooby Doo*. Speaking of which, the things you can do with a QuickCam are limitless. It's great for any kind of video conferencing (see page 24) or for jazzing up your Web page. It's simple to install and even simpler to use, and at this price you can't go wrong. For more info visit the Connectix Web site at http://www.connectix.com/ For Mac or PC.



Built to fully utilize Windows 95, Delrina's Cyberjack 7.0 combines a Web browser with a news reader, IRC access, FTP, gopher, archie and more for a complete Internet product. You can even use your e-mail account directly through the Microsoft Exchange that comes built into Windows 95. Cyberjack is designed around the concept of a guide book, a feature new users will especially relish when bumbling around the 'net. A downloadable beta version is available at http://www.cyberjack.com or visit the Delrina Web site at http://www.delrina.com. For PCs only.

Cyberjack 7.0

By Delrina

$179

>FAQ*

Name: Nick Simicich
Age: 32
Gender: Male
Home: Boca Raton, Florida.
e-mail address: njs@scifi.maid.com

Each month, we pose a set of questions to the people who make the 'net work, those who oversee newsgroups, mailing lists, Inter-relay chat channels and so on through a list of e-mail questions, hence the name of this page. This month, we profiled the keeper of the FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) for the newsgroup alt.fan.howard-stern. The FAQ can be reached at http://scifi.maid.com/howard.html

Explain your group and its purpose.
Howard Stern is a phenomenon without equal. He is an entertainer who is also a political lightning rod. He draws heat and criticism for things that other entertainers do casually. He stretches the limits of acceptability and others follow in his footsteps. This group is for fans of Howard and his body of work to get together and discuss his activities.

How did you get involved with it?
I argued for it and created it.

Do you have a day job? If so, what is it?
I am an Internet Security Consultant for the IBM Global Consulting Group.

What's a typical conversation thread like?
It might be about a show personality, one of Howard's appearances on TV, or speculation on his upcoming movie. It might also be political commentary by people who just don't get it.

What's the oddest thing that had to be addressed in the alt.fan.howard-stern FAQ?
The size of Howard Stern's (physical endowment). Now that the FAQ is htmlized, I find (by looking in the referrer log) that many folks do an infoseek search on 'size' and pull up the Howard Stern FAQ.

What's the strangest thing that you've seen online?
Too many people mistake the 'net for real life. But the oddest thing is that over the course of the 10 years I've been involved with the 'net, it has become real life.

NICK SIMICH: FAN OF SCUBA AND STERN

Are flames common in your group? If so, what usually brings them on?
Flames are common. People have strong opinions about Howard Stern and express them, and others strongly disagree. Also, we seem to have a large number of idiots. Some of the idiots are flamed, and some of them do the flaming.

Does the conversation typically stay on that topic or how has it wandered in the past?
It has wandered quite a bit. Perhaps the most consistent wandering was when Howard ran for Governor of New York on the Libertarian ticket. For a long time it seemed that every Libertarian thread was cross-posted to the Howard Stern fan group. This seemed to keep on happening long after Howard withdrew from the race. I guess the Libertarians didn't get the joke.

Describe your computer area.
I have a recliner with a bookshelf on my right side and two monitors on my left. One of the monitors is on a switch. Mostly I use Linux, but I also have a machine that runs OS/2 and Windows programs. My wife has her computers as well, and they are all ethernet connected.

What's your favorite thing to munch on when you surf?
Water with a bit of lime in it, radishes, Japanese soy sauce flavored rice crackers and soprasetta sausage.

How long do you typically spend working overseeing your group, maintaining the FAQ or mailing list in a week?
In the old days, right after the group was newgrouped, I spent a lot of time answering questions in the group. I don't do that anymore. The group has long since reached critical mass and has a life of its own. I am spending about an hour a week updating the FAQ these days, as Howard is in the news and now that the FAQ is in html, and can be fetched at any time. So if I have a schedule in it, and it changes, I try to change it immediately, but I don't repost the FAQ in the newsgroup. Remember that the purpose of a FAQ is to give people something to read so that they can get a level set about the purpose of the group. It can't be too long, or people won't read it. Its purpose is to reduce traffic in the group.

What do people do that makes you mad (while on-line)?
Two things: Act like clueless newbies. There are plenty of things that one can read about how to act on usenet or mailing lists. There is really no excuse for cluelessness. One example in the Howard Stern Group: posting asking for phone numbers. All of the numbers are either in a FAQ or in the radio list that is pointed to by the FAQ. Failing that, they could pick up their phone and call directory assistance. Instead they waste thousands of people's time who are looking for discussion and have another thread of postings to skip. Posting tests to a discussion group is another clueless act.

The second thing is that when you argue, you should consider that you are in a negotiation. The right answer is win-win. If you argue just for the sake of argument and don't acknowledge when the other person makes a point, you are acting like a lawyer.

What direction do you think the Internet is headed?
To a great extent, the Internet is a logical extension of the telephone. It will tend to break down national barriers and speed communication. The Web is an amazing thing. The Web is reducing the entry barrier to publication to the point that anyone can publish widely. In this case, "The Medium is the Message," to quote Marshall McLuhan. The Web is more important than the content of the Web, at this point.

Are you a dog person or a cat person? Or do you prefer an alternative pet?
I have three parrots, a blue and gold macaw, a severe macaw, and an African grey parrot. I also have a retired racing greyhound. We used to have a cat, and a bunch of ferrets, but they got old and passed on.

Finally, why is alt.fan.howard-stern important?
Um, I don't think that alt.fan.howard-stern could be classed as important.

(DISPATCHES FROM THE DIGITAL EDGE)

BRAINPAN

by Mike Riley

In the beginning, the Department of Defense created the Internet. TCP/IP (the communication protocol of the 'net) was shaped in the image of frame relay and it was good.

The Internet sprang forth primitive, new standards for e-mail and communication were born. File Transfer Protocol was created for simple file exchange between clients and servers, and it was good. As the mold of cyberspace solidified, these protocols survived the test of time and thrived. But something was missing. Something was keeping the Internet from easy access.

Then came NCSA Mosaic, which begot Netscape and Spyglass-based browsers (the latter of which begot Microsoft Internet Explorer). Though created from the same source, the battle of duality had begun. Now that the Internet spawned a tool to make navigating from server to server as simple as clicking highlighted text and graphics, the race for cyberspace hit full throttle. Two companies emerged with a claim for control: Netscape and Microsoft. While both companies offer browsers displaying nearly identical HTML tags, vast differences exist under their hoods. This underlying weave of interfaces is forcing Internet developers and content providers to make a choice when they have to decide where to invest their time and resources. Why? The two companies are diverging their platforms like tectonic plates responsible for continental drift. Even with Microsoft's recent commitment to support Sun's Java in their Internet products, the two warring companies will continue to forge separate paths.

I'm going to make a prediction that may surprise and even anger some readers. In the end, I believe Microsoft will be crowned winner of the 'net race. While Netscape has shown rabid aggression in developing new Internet software, the perception of who rules the Internet in the minds of users will be what matters. Netscape's early lead in this race parallels strides made in the U.S./Soviet race into space in the 1960s. Except, this time around, corporations are battling it out, not countries; the space in question is cyberspace, not outer space. Like the Soviets in the space race, Netscape repeatedly took the Internet community by surprise with new technology in an attempt to make their browser the next computer operating system. Meanwhile, mega-powerful Microsoft has been playing catch-up to the strides made by Netscape. Just as the U.S. tagged behind, playing follow-the-leader to Soviets advances, so too will Microsoft. That is, until their software edges out ahead of Netscape's with a developmental victory. Just as President Kennedy declared "war" on Russia with his end-of-the-decade space challenge, so too on Dec. 7, 1995 has Bill Gates thrown the gauntlet and declared "war" against Netscape for control of the 'net.

THE MONOPOLY OF MICROSOFT

This is why I think Microsoft will best Netscape. First, Microsoft conquered the desktop war. As a company, it knows how to fight and win a battle. Second, Microsoft has overflowing resources and knows how to market its products better than any other software vendor and with that, Microsoft also knows how to spin the web of consumer opinion. Third, just as the Soviet Union went broke with its space program, so too is Netscape with its free software giveaways. Fourth, with the aid of contracted help, Microsoft's recently announced Internet strategy will deliver the full promise of the Internet before Netscape will. Finally, Microsoft's VB Script is a heck of a lot easier to program than Sun/Netscape's JavaScript, which means more people will learn and use it and more authors will write about it.

Some people, especially Netscape advocates and employees, will not agree. They might even call me an idiot. Some may suggest, and rightly so, that the two companies will expend so much effort lobbing catch phrases and foisting incompatible APIs back and forth they will be so spent and exhausted by the battle to allow a wildcard to rise above them both. The most likely wildcard would be Spyglass, the only Internet software development company that has made a hearty profit on licensing its technology, as well as its stock offerings. Of course, if that's the case, Microsoft will simply purchase Spyglass for a staggering sum, if only to be crowned winner.

Ardent Netscape fans, I challenge you to prove me wrong.

Send your reasons to IU@mcs.net. Riley will debate the most intelligent arguments in a future column. (Riley says that flamemail will be regarded as worthless, psychopathic rambling and will not be considered for reply.)

MIKE RILEY HEADS UP SENDAI INTERACTIVE MEDIA AND OVERSEES HTTP://WWW.NUKE.COM.

Missing the Point

(Skewering The Faulty)

THE TOP 5% NEEDS A LITTLE QUALITY CONTROL

The Web would be a hell of a place for lemmings. After all, most surfers find it easier to follow their leaders off cliffs of bad taste than head off to the left for a little experimenting. As arbiters ourselves, we try to be careful about where we send our readers—it's our own reputation that gets maimed if we steer people to lame wastes of bandwidth. Obviously, it works the same for any other arbiter, but one company in particular seems to be forgoing this lesson in reputation-building in favor a little more exposure: It's called Pointcom.

If you haven't heard of the Point (http://www.pointcom.com), you either have your graphics turned off or you're spending too much time looking only for sex sites (the Point is a G-rated service, after all). Pointcom isn't inherently evil; its reviews aren't bad, and the concept is worthwhile. The Point chooses about 20 new sites a day, rates them, and then sends people there via hyperlinks. The 5 percent is kind of randomly chosen. After all, measuring 5 percent of the 'net is like ranking the top 5 percent of fish in the ocean—it's not exactly a static pool. Pointcom freely admits that, however, so we'll give it the benefit of the doubt on numbers.

We won't allow it leeway on some of its choices, however. The Point has gone from worthy service to merit badge Santa Claus, handing out Christmas GIFs to all the little kiddies. Nowadays, getting a Point badge is like getting an award for intramural soccer in seventh grade; sure, you can pin it up on your locker, but almost everyone has got one. Real awards don't come easily, and they can't be courted. No one campaigns for a MacArthur Fellowship, and there aren't enough to go around. That's what makes them special. Actually, the fact it comes with $100,000 makes it special, but the Point isn't that loaded. All it has is its integrity.

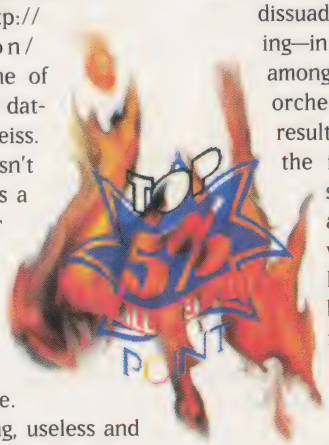
by justin ware

Don't think its integrity is in jeopardy? Check out some of the duds graced with the familiar blue logo. First comes Singles Web (http://www.ios.com/-hyson/singles/welcome.html), one of the poorest excuses for a dating service since Heidi Fleiss. The intent of this page isn't even subtly hidden; this is a slap-in-the-face appeal for a service that can't possibly do much good for anyone. ("Hey, I read your ad on the Internet. Want to get some coffee? Oh, you're in Prague. Sorry.") This page is boring, useless and asks for money. To top that off, the advice isn't even very good. Tip #10 for men: "Avoid calling your date 'stupid' unless absolutely necessary." When *would* that be necessary? When she slams your hand in the car door? A little quality control seems to be in order here.

A quick inspection of the assembly line might keep out sites like the Brown Curling Club (http://www.brown.edu/Students/Brown_Curling_Club/), a relatively attractive page, but a bit irrelevant, considering that visitors to the Point come from all over the world. Sure, there may be people out there who care about either Brown University or curling, but there aren't a heck of a lot who care about both. If looking good was all it took for something to be of general interest, *Models Inc.* would still be on the air.

The reason the Point does this is understandable; its badge links back to its site, so the more people that sport it, the more hits Pointcom gets. The more hits it gets, the easier it is to obtain online advertisers. It's a good deal. Letting a few dogs slip by doesn't really hurt anyone.

Except that everyone on the 'net knows that submitting an average site to the Point can mean extra hits, so now people are starting to campaign for the damn thing. Books for Children...and More (http://www.users.interport.net/-hdu/index.html), for example, blatantly beckons surfers to express their accolades: "If you find my site useful, please take a few minutes to tell the folks at Pointcom your opinion. They have appointed themselves the task of creating a list of the top 5 percent Web sites. I think the site belongs on their list; if you agree, please submit a review to them." This is a site for kiddie books, for crying out loud. We hate to see such a pleasant resource prostituting itself. And the Point isn't doing anything to dissuade this kind of campaigning—in fact, the consistent word amongst netizens is that a well-orchestrated assault usually results in a review. We know the feeling. We get handed sites by readers every day, and more often than not, we'll give them a glance. But there's a fine line between response and fawning. We wouldn't want Pointcom to become the Ron Brewington of the Web. You know, Ron Brewington—the American Urban Radio reviewer who loves *everything* ("It just doesn't get any better than *Gordy*! Four stars!"). His recommendation doesn't mean much anymore. If it's not careful, neither will Point's.



(BEHIND CLOSED DOORS)

403

Whither Warez?

by David Allen

PIRATES ARE QUICKLY BEING FORBIDDEN BANISHED FROM THE HIGH SEAS OF THE 'NET

A big discussion ensued recently on my ISP's local Usenet group. The topic was the absence of warez groups from our newsfeed. Warez groups, for the benefit of the uninitiated, are usually devoted to the posting of pirate software on the Usenet. Since distributing pirate (illegally duplicated) software is unlawful, most commercial sites refuse to carry the groups, having an understandable fear of FBI or Secret Service agents launching Waco-style raids on their offices. As the discussion progressed, three camps developed: The Information Anarchists, Disgruntled Consumers and Militant Developers.

The first group believes that information should be free for the taking. Knowledge cannot, and should not, be bought and sold. Software pirates are the champions of the downtrodden, leveling the playing field by providing software to everybody, not just to people with money.

This sounds terribly noble, but it ignores a lot a fundamental facts of life, the most important being the power of incentive. Sad to say, altruism is a very weak motivator in human society. If information were free, the flow of information would fall to a trickle. The prime motivator to write something, whether it is a program or a novel, is financial gain. Fame is ego-gratifying, but its most important by-product is its ability to generate money for the wielder. Fame is short-lived; money (managed wisely) will see you through to the grave. There are exceptions to this rule, but they are rare.

As champions of the underdog, software pirates fail miserably. The underdog is not the guy who can't afford the latest computer game or utility, but the poor schmo who can't afford a computer.

I asked one espouser of the software-pirates-as-Robin-Hood-philosophy, if he believed so much in helping the poor—why didn't he hijack a truck full of Performas and Presarios?

"That would be stealing," he answered, proving my long-held view that irony is often wasted on the clueless.

The second group has a more defensible point. The Disgruntled Consumer is the person upon whose back the entire computer revolution has been built. Without the DC's money, Bill Gates would just be another geeky office boy who women avoid.

Disgruntled Consumers argue most persuasively that they are not "pirating" software, but trying it out, in the spirit of shareware, before they invest their hard-earned money. This argument, while impressive on the surface, loses a good bit of its luster when I ask the advocate if they have paid all their shareware fees. Sheepish looks and foot-shuffling ensue.

Still, they point out the inequities and contradictions in shrink-wrap licenses, contracts to which they are bound simply by opening the package. These licenses relieve the seller of any obligations and/or liability for the product, while simultaneously encumbering the user with numerous restrictions and limitations in how the product is used, the violation that could involve a prison sentence.

The Militant Developer will have none of this. Piracy is stealing, pure and simple, and no amount of sugar-coating or equivocating will change that. Software is too complicated a product to produce perfectly, and disclaimers in the license are needed because people are so litigious, and will sue for the most trivial inconvenience.

Again, there is some merit to this view, though it still does not address the fact that some buggy software does not involve "trivial" problems, but very serious ones that can cause the consumer no end of grief. So, where does that leave the warez groups?

In the cold, I'm afraid. These conflicting arguments, no matter how much merit they may seem to possess (or lack), are entirely irrelevant to the reality of the situation. Warez groups are becoming *personae non grata* as cyberspace becomes more commercial. The 'net is no longer the exclusive playground of technocrats, academics and hackers; it is a multi-billion-dollar business concern where government and corporations decide what is, and is not, permissible.

As usual, questions of morality have been supplanted by profit.

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR DAVID ALLEN WRITES A COLUMN ON ISSUES FOR THE DIGITAL FRONTIER. AS FAR AS WE KNOW, HE OWNS NO PIRATED SOFTWARE. YOU CAN REACH HIM AT DALLEN@NR.INFI.NET

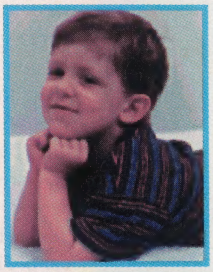
Mirsky Presents: A Valentine's Day Special

Millions of people around the world have put up pages about themselves on the Web. The Web is thus the perfect place for people to find romantic partners and companions. Being single, I spent much of my holiday season alone, online, scouring the Web for couples who I think would be perfect for each other. I have decided to share them with you.

SHE likes to pretend she's a warrior.
http://spasm.clues.com/-malwen/kitted.html

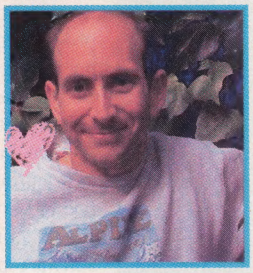
HE is 7-feet tall and says he tortures cats.
http://www.eecs.nwu.edu/-bigdan/home.htm

SHE likes the Power Rangers.
http://www.webcom.com/-donh/esther/Darby.htm



HE likes the Power Rangers.
http://emporium.turnpike.net/-daniel/Drew.html

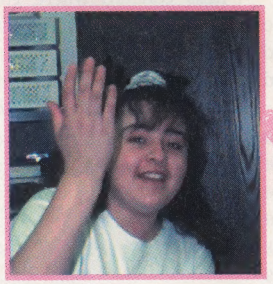
SHE never altered her automatically generated University page.
http://www.uidaho.edu:80/-cher9252/



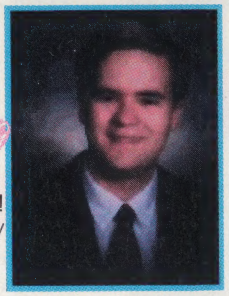
HE claims his High Five Award page is the Carnegie Hall of the Web.
http://www.highfive.com/

SHE is President and CEO of a large bank.
http://bankswith.apollotrust.com/-hjc/homepage.html

HE has no such credentials.
http://mother.idg.no/-bjorna/



SHE's got a Web page.
http://www.svii.com/marisol.htm



And what do you know, HE's got a Web page, too!
http://www-personal.umich.edu/-wilcoxs/

Matchmaking People on the Web

Obviously, Mirsky offers these match-ups in the spirit of good-natured fun. You can check out more of his humor at his Worst of the Web at http://mirsky.turnpike.net/wow/Worst.html

(The Last Word)

Large

http://filepile.com

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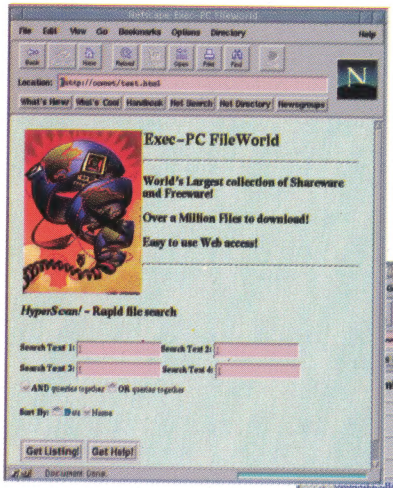

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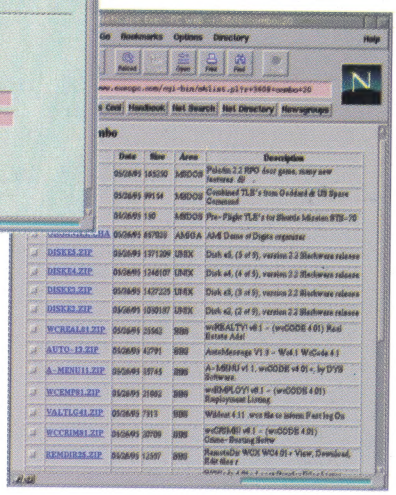

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